Midsummer

Katharine Adams

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MIDSUMMER

A Story for Boys and Girls

Books By

KATHARINE ADAMS

Midsummer
Midwinter
Wisp: A Girl of Dublin
Red Caps and Lilies
Mehitable
The Silver Tarn
Toto and the Gift

There was an almost unearthly groaning and creaking, and far off the sinister roll of thunder.

MIDSUMMER

A Story for Boys and Girls

BY

KATHARINE ADAMS

PUBLIC
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NEW YORK

1932

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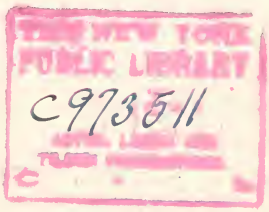

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FOR

Eugenia		*Palmer*
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Julia		*Lynn*

PREVIEW
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MIDSUMMER

A Story for Boys and Girls

CHAPTER 1

On the Rocks

"We are to meet them on the rocks. Old Hjalmar from the castle is to row them over. Isn't it splendid to think they are really here!"

Valfried Zander tossed her gold braid of hair over her shoulder as she helped her little sister Astrid to climb into the green, freshly painted boat. Then she called, "Jacken come." A fat, black and brown dachshund waddled slowly across the shiny beach and as slowly scrambled over the edge of the rowboat, settling himself comfortably under the first seat.

Bjorn, her brother, gave a shove with his hand on the hot beach, as he jumped into the boat. He had been fishing and his plump, good-natured face was very red. He took the oars and the boat glided out onto the grey green water. There were splashes of color everywhere, purple and gold streaks on the bay. The sky, too, was purple with strange flashes of green and scarlet, for it was evening in Sweden and it was almost midsummer time.

Valfried seated herself in the stern of the boat,

fanning herself with her wide straw hat. Her blue cotton frock was splashed with seawood. Little Astrid left her seat and came and sat next her sister. She had a doll under her arm, a doll dressed in a red skirt, white bodice, and tall, black velvet cap; her cousin, Signa Thorm had brought it to her when she had come from Dalarne, to see them at Christmas.

Bjorn frowned at Astrid. "How many times have I told you not to change your seat when the boat is on the bay!" He spoke in a cross sort of way. Bjorn was sixteen and he felt that he should keep his sister in order, especially Astrid who did not mind his scoldings in the least.

"The new girl will like my doll, I know she will. I don't think she's ever seen one as nice, do you, sister?" Before Valfried could answer she said to her brother, "Oh, Bjorn, mother told you to put on a clean collar and you forgot."

"We've so hoped that the Count Essen's grandchildren would come from America and now they're really here. In a few minutes we shall see them and soon we shall know them well. Audrey, what an odd name the girl has, it's not at all Swedish; but the boy's name is sensible, it is Sven," said Valfried, putting her arm around Astrid.

"The girl is like her name, she's not a bit Swedish," answered Bjorn, lifting his oar and watching the drops that fell from it turn to azure and gold

in the brilliant light. "Our Karl saw her this morning when he took the milk. He says she has dark eyes and hair and that she looks quite unlike any of us. He didn't see her to speak to, but the boy walked down the path with him. He told him they felt a bit lonely and were looking forward to knowing us. The boy's all right, Karl says, he spoke a little Swedish. It must have been funny Swedish for Karl didn't understand much that he said."

"Karl is rather stupid. Oh isn't that just like a boy. Why didn't you tell us before that he had seen them? I should have told you right away."

"Here's the Gustafsburg boat, we'll have to hurry unless you want to take the waves," called Bjorn, as suddenly from around a huge pile of rocks at the end of the bay, appeared a large white steamer. The rocks were grey and mysterious, rising out of the clear, rainbow tinted water, the fjords were deep but so narrow, guarded as they were by the great piles of granite, that the boats glided through them unobserved until they appeared at the opening of the bay.

"I don't want to take the waves, Bjorn," whimpered Astrid, holding her doll tightly.

"You're not a coward I hope, all your ancestors have been in the navy and one of them saved seven lives in a wreck," said Bjorn. However he good naturedly pulled hard at the oars. It was too late, for the steamer was close on them and so in spite of

Astrid, there was nothing to do but turn the boat so that its prow met the waves squarely. The next moment they were dipping down, down into the great green waves, the spray sweeping over them.

Valfried laughed with delight but Astrid held her doll very tightly and cuddled close to her sister. People on the decks waved to them, and soon after the boat went by, the waves grew calmer and they were able to land.

Bjorn shoved the boat well up on the sand at the foot of a great stretch of rocks, then he lifted Astrid out, setting her on a ledge just above him. Valfried had jumped quickly out and by the time the others reached her, was waving towards a rowboat which appeared as suddenly from behind the rocks, as the steamer had done. An old man was rowing a boat in which were the two new comers, a boy and a girl. As soon as they had landed he rowed quickly away, disappearing behind the rocks.

Bjorn went half way down to meet them but Valfried, suddenly shy, sat at the top and tried not to appear as excited as she felt, when they came up to her. She stood up and gave the girl her hand, pulling hard so as to help her over the last boulder.

"You're Sven and Audrey, aren't you? We're so glad you've come," she said, pulling her sister around in front of her, for Astrid too, had felt shy and this was very unusual indeed.

The girl spoke first; she had short, dark hair which

flapped about her face and she wore a dark sailor suit.

"Yes, we came last night. We've heard of you from Tante Greta and I guess we'll be great friends." She smiled at the three of them and so did Sven. His hair was not as dark as his sister's and he had blue eyes.

"It's great fun being here, it's dandy. I'm mighty glad we're going to get acquainted," said Sven, as they all sat down on the rocks.

"We can have much fun out here on the rocks, and in the water. Do you swim?" asked Bjorn.

"Oh, yes, we go to the seashore every summer with granny, but it's all so different from this, hundreds of people on the beach; you don't know how different it is," answered the girl before her brother could speak. She opened a basket and brought out an elaborate cake covered with sugar and nuts, a flask of milk and five white enamel cups.

"Tante Greta asked if we wanted coffee and I said we never drank it, so she gave me the milk to have with this wonderful cake. She says a woman makes them who lives in a place called Boo, near here—such a funny name—Boo."

Audrey Bradford threw back her head and laughed and the others laughed, too.

"It's a funny little village an hour's sail from here, it's the nearest village to the castle. Your aunt means old Fru Wallman. This is good cake,

isn't it!" exclaimed Valfried. Audrey poured out the milk and Sven passed around the cake which Audrey had cut into ample slices.

"Don't you like coffee?" asked little Astrid; she had been looking steadily at Audrey ever since she sat down beside her on the rock.

Audrey smiled at her. "Not much, do you? Oh will you let me see your doll?" She held it up admiringly.

"She's dressed like a Dalacarnian peasant; we have cousins who live where they all dress that way," explained Valfried. "Astrid and I went to visit them once; we all went to church in a boat and rowed across the bay in the longest boat you ever saw."

"It was most a mile long," put in Astrid.

"Nonsense, Astrid, it was nothing of the kind, but it held about twenty people."

"We must go there, Sven. Oh I want to see everything, I want to see all the world."

The Zander children looked at her with great interest, she was so different from them.

"Tante Greta seems so quiet and sad, poor dear, and the castle is so big and gloomy. Sven and I were homesick last night, weren't we, Sven?"

Sven nodded. "It was sort of funny, so different from New York; we'd just arrived, and, well, grandfather and Tante Greta aren't like father."

"They almost never leave the castle. Mother asks your aunt to come for coffee but she never does.

Mother's been to have coffee with her. She was asked to come the last time, when the letter had arrived saying you and Sven were coming," said Valfried who had always very much wanted to see inside the castle and had begged her mother in vain to take her when she went to see Froken Essen, the children's aunt.

"It's going to be splendid now that we know you," Audrey went on. "Isn't it strange to think of all the things we've seen that you've never seen and all the things you've seen that we don't know anything about!"

"I don't believe they've ever heard of Coney Island; think what they've missed," remarked Sven with a laugh, as they gathered together the remains of the cake and the cups. Sven was already beginning to feel better; it was so jolly, meeting these new friends.

"Yes, I've read about Coney Island, I'm going to see it some day. I'm going to be in the navy and so I'll travel around everywhere," answered Bjorn.

Audrey looked at the silver flagon which she held in her hands; it had the Essen coat of arms embossed on one side, two swords crossed. She gazed at it curiously for a moment, shaking the dark hair out of her eyes.

"This is mother's country, our mother whom we cannot remember. You must tell us, oh, so many things. You see father was only just one month in Sweden, years ago when he first met mother. Fath-

er's so American, he says he only remembers Sweden because it was where he met mother. He was in Stockholm all the time, he only came out to the Castle On The Rocks to be married."

Audrey spoke in a quick, impulsive sort of way but the Zanders seemed to understand her.

"You know English pretty well, don't you?" said Sven to Valfried, as Audrey finished speaking.

"Well, we had an English governess for five years, we ought to be able to speak and understand it. Don't you two speak Swedish at all?"

"Not much, just a few words," answered Sven, as though he were ashamed of the fact.

"We're going to learn, old Hjalmar has promised to teach me. I asked him. I like Hjalmar, he's so sort of, oh, like an old servant in a story book. He's so different from any one at home." Audrey laughed as she spoke, putting her arm around Astrid who snuggled up to her.

"I love you," announced Astrid. "I'm going to tell you all my secrets, you're nicer than Valfried," she went on. "She's always talking things to Ingeborg Wicander and telling me to run along and not bother."

They all laughed, except Valfried who did not seem any too well pleased.

"I know we're going to have some dandy times, all of us together," said Sven, "I think it's jolly here."

"It's like a dream," answered Audrey, looking off at the flashes of green in the northern sky.

"Sweden isn't a dream," exclaimed little Astrid indignantly. "It's the very best country in the world." They all laughed merrily at this, and Sven patted Astrid's arm.

"I think it's a tip top country, Astrid," he said.

"We'll swim and row and have picnics," Valfried smiled at Audrey as she spoke.

Bjorn and Sven started down the rocks to look for Bjorn's fishing rods which he kept in a cave-like place in the side of the rocks, with some other treasures. The girls began at once to get better acquainted. Valfried forgot to be shy and seeing that Audrey was interested, told her of school in Stockholm in the winter, of the dancing class that met every Saturday night, at the home of different playmates, where they learned to dance their national dances and wore the dresses of the different provinces. "Oh the dances are such fun, Audrey, I know you'd love them; perhaps we can go up to Stockholm while you're here and go out to Skansen and see the peasants dance."

"They have chocolate with whipped cream on top and cakes too, when the dancing class meets at our house. Mother lets me stay up till the cakes are passed around," said Astrid.

Some hungry seagulls flapped their wings nearby and she took the last of her piece of cake to share

with them, climbing down the rocks as fast as her fat legs would take her.

The boys called to them to come down and Valfried called back, "In a few minutes, it's early yet." Then she said, turning to Audrey, "It's wonderful to think you've really come; I've thought about it for so long and have wondered about you."

Audrey nodded. "I'm glad we've come. Last night I was homesick and after I'd gone to bed I thought of the hotel where we live, in New York, of the busses on Fifth Avenue and of the colored boy, at the hotel, the elevator boy who used to sing hymns for us, of soda water and even chewing gum though I don't like it very well. Such funny things came into my mind, I mean things I never would have thought I'd miss." She looked off towards the castle, towering high above them, on the great rocks. "The castle must be the most dismal place in the world in winter, it's dismal anyway. Do you know, Valfried, I'll love everything here, except the castle, but whenever I think of it, I'm sad."

Valfried was silent for a minute. She hesitated before she answered, "Your grandfather is a very sad old man, or so the people say; he hasn't talked to any one for years, I mean, anyone outside the castle."

Audrey nodded. "They're both said. Aunt Greta hasn't smiled once since we came, yet she is so gentle

and kind. There's a mystery—oh, Valfried, do you suppose there is one? Wouldn't it be—well—sort of interesting if there should be a mystery? Anyway, the castle isn't a happy place at all."

The boys called again and they both stood up. Valfried wound her fair hair around her head as they stood for a moment, looking off at the gorgeous scarlet and purple of the sea and sky.

The two girls looked at each other; after a minute, they smiled at each other, happy in their new-found friendship. Audrey had brown eyes, with black specks in them. "Pepper and salt eyes," Sven called them. Her black bobbed hair stood out each side of her tanned little face. She wore a dark blue Peter Thompson suit and Valfried in her pale blue cotton frock, with her light hair, looked very fair beside her.

There was a sound of water splashing and both girls looked down quickly. A boat glided around the bend in the rocks and slowly passed by them. In the boat stood a boy, paddling with an oar; he wore rough, dark trousers and a white shirt, which was open at the throat, showing his brown neck and chest. The afterglow of the sun fell full upon him, the water around the boat was bronze and gold and the boy's hair shone like gold in the dazzling light. He held his head slightly back and as he passed the girls, he saw them, where they stood, high on the rocks. He smiled a little shyly at Valfried and

slightly nodded his head and the boat glided on, down the bay.

Audrey turned and put her hand on Valfried's arm. "Who is that?" she asked. Valfried looked at her a little curiously, for she seemed startled.

"Why that is Nore Carlson, just a fisher boy who lives across the bay. He taught Bjorn to fish and sail, he's just his age, fifteen."

Audrey stood quite still near the edge of the rock and watched the vanishing boat, a black spot in the rainbow water.

"A fisher boy," she said half to herself. "I don't know why, but I want that boy to be my friend."

CHAPTER 2

Axel's Invitation

"CALL the children, Nore, supper's ready."

"Yes, mother." Nore shouted across the sun-drenched beach:

"Thure, Marta, Karl, come!"

There was a faint answering shout, in the distance, and several little figures, dark against the purple and scarlet of the sea and sky, came running towards their brother. Nore stood waiting for them, tossing his cap high in the air and catching it. He was tall for his fifteen years, slightly built but strong enough. When his sister Thure ran up to him, he caught her in his arms, swung her to his shoulder, and ran with her into the little low-roofed cottage which was their home.

The tiny house was set in the midst of a heaped up pile of rocks, stones and seaweed. The other children ran laughingly after Nore, up the wooden steps and into the living room. Their mother looked up at them as she set a plate of freshly fried fish on the table.

"Wash your hands quickly for supper, children; you must have been playing for over an hour on the beach," she said.

"Oh mother, we found a star fish. Oh mother, I'm so hungry," called little Thure, as Nore set her down from his shoulder. Marta, a girl of thirteen, caught her hand and they ran on out through the door at the back, leading from a tiny bedroom, to the bright green pump which stood at one side of the cottage.

They danced about, a moment, in the fresh brilliant air, before they pushed the creaking handle up and down, and washed their hands and faces for supper.

When they were all seated at the table and had been plentifully helped to the fish and potatoes and hard grey Swedish bread, their mother, smiling first at Nore and then at the others, said:

"Old Hjalmar from the castle was here, while you were out, all of you, to-day. He had news!"

"May we each have three guesses, mother?" asked Marta—"I guess then, it was some surprise for Thure's Name Day, old Hjalmar always has a surprise for her."

"I guess that it's something to do with the midsummer dance, on the green at Boo, next week," said twelve year old Karl.

The mother turned towards the eldest boy. "What do you guess, Nore?" she asked.

Nore smiled at her as he passed her the bread. "My guess is that the Fairy Princess has come," he said.

The mother nodded. "Nore is right," she said.

"It was hardly a guess, mother, because I saw her; she was standing on the rocks with Froken Valfried Zander when I went by them in the boat, a few minutes ago."

There was a clamor of voices as the children eagerly questioned him. Fru Carlson looked at him as eagerly as the others, though she said nothing. She was a sweet faced woman, whose light hair was brushed straight back from her face. Her hands were rough and work worn but they were the most loving hands in the world, to the four children who sat about the table.

"I only saw her for a moment," said Nore, in answer to the children's questions. "The boy wasn't there, I think I saw him with Bjorn, in the distance. The girl is very dark." He stood up and carried his plate and cup over to the sink, as he spoke, and his mother's eyes followed him.

Marta cleared the table quietly and neatly and put before her mother a bowl of wild strawberries. Nore smiled with pleasure when he saw them.

"Thure and I picked them this afternoon. We played in the woods where we found the lingon* in September," said twelve year old Karl.

* lingon—small bright red berry, tasting like cranberry.

Marta and Thure were busy talking over the arrival of the children at the castle, as they washed the dishes. Marta washed and little Thure dried the dishes very nicely with some clean blue and white towels, and put them away in the white wood cupboard, behind the door.

"Come, Nore, help put the dishes away, just for fun, and go on with the story about the lost Viking ships—please," called Marta gaily, as she put a kettle full of fresh water on the stove to heat, so that the pretty little rose china saucers which they had used for the wild strawberries could be nicely washed.

"Their mother sat in the doorway, her hands folded in her lap; she turned and spoke over her shoulder to Marta:

"Nore didn't hear you, he's gone off down the beach, he's had a long day." She sighed as she spoke and as she looked off at the dancing waters there was a strange expression in her eyes. It was as though she was thinking deeply, as though she was struggling with some thought that she could not put in words.

"Karl," she said a little sharply, "fix the nets. Your brother needs rest; you must learn to do more of the work for you are almost twelve." She put her hand lovingly on the boy's shoulder as she spoke but she looked off down the beach at the slight figure of the older lad. Karl who sat on the rough ground

close to his mother, stood up at her words, and started to go around the corner of the cottage. He, too, looked off at his brother.

"Mother," he asked, "do you think when I'm as old as Nore that I'll be as straight and tall—and—and"—he paused a minute—"as different?"

His mother smiled. "No, you will not be like Nore, my älskling,* but no doubt you will be fine and large and always your mother will love you." She spoke quite merrily and hugged little Thure who had come and sat down in her lap, the dish cloth still in her hand.

"Mama lilla, I want a new dress for Sophie," she coaxed, patting her mother's cheek, and holding out her very forlorn doll for her mother to see. "I want to play that she is invited to the castle, to a ball, and she could not go like this."

Fru Carlson laughed and so did Marta who came and sat beside her mother, on the step.

"Oh mother, I do want to see the strange children, just think, they've come all the way from America." Marta put her chin in her hand and looked off at the great grey mass of granite, across the bay. "It can't be a very happy place, mother, not for a girl." She put her arms about her mother and hugged her. "I'd rather be here, just all of us together, than in any castle anywhere!" she exclaimed.

* älskling—darling.

Karl came around the corner, his arms full of the slippery nets. He went slowly down the rocks and Marta ran to help him. They stretched the nets to dry, across some poles; there were little rolls of birch bark attached to the upper sides of the poles, to keep the nets tight.

"They'll be dry before breakfast if it's the sort of day I think it'll be tomorrow," said Karl, "I'm going to ask Nore if I can go along too, if mother can spare me. I'm tired of playing with Magnus Larson, I want to see something."

"Well, you won't see very much, just going up the skerries a little way, with Nore," answered Marta as they walked back to the cottage.

"Nore and I have good times when I go fishing with him—see those new sails of old Gustaf Mamburg," exclaimed Karl, turning to watch the stately sail boat, with it's red sails. He waved his hand and someone from the boat waved back.

Meanwhile Nore had walked slowly down the beach. He threw himself down on the sand at last and pulled his cap down over his eyes, for the evening sun was blinding. He had been fishing all day and he was tired. "Pepparkakor," a half breed sheep dog, who had appeared suddenly at his side, as he walked along the beach, lay down beside him and sighed as though he too, were tired.

"Where have you been, Pepparkakor? The children have looked for you since breakfast. Why do

you run away?" asked Nore sleepily, putting his hand on the dog's head, as they both lay there in the sand.

Nore was thinking of the arrival of the American children, the dark looking girl whom he had seen with Valfried Zander. For all the Carlson children the castle on the rocks held the greatest charm, but for Nore, it held more than that. He had gone there once, on an errand for the pastor at Boo, the nearest village. He had been given a note by the pastor, who had been in a great hurry to take the next boat for Stockholm. He had happened to see Nore and had asked him as a favor, to deliver the message. "Give this, yourself, to the Count Essen, do not leave it with a servant," he had said.

Nore had waited in the great hall until a manservant had shown him into the library, where the count was sitting. Nore could shut his eyes and see the room so plainly, the rich old room, the walls lined with books, the dark room, deeply shadowed, the great wolf rug in front of the fire, and in a carved oak chair, close to the fire, the old man himself.

Nore had spoken. "A note for you, Greve Essen, from the Herr Pastor."

How the old man had jumped! "Who spoke?" he had asked sharply, even though half asleep. "I, Nore Carlson, the Herr Pastor's messenger," he had answered. He had put the note into the hands of the old man who sat up dazedly, roused suddenly from his sleep. Nore had turned away at once, he

had been only a little boy at the time and he suddenly felt a little frightened. He stumbled over a rug as he crossed the dark room, and as he went out, he heard the count mutter again, "Who spoke, who spoke?"

Nore had never told anyone of his "adventure," as he liked to call it; it had been fun, just keeping it to himself. When he heard his sisters and brother wondering as to what it could be like, inside the castle, he had thought, "Some time I'll tell them about the library," but he never had; even his mother did not know that he had been there.

He was almost asleep, and Pepparkakor was far in the land of dreams when suddenly a voice called him, there were flying steps, and a boy of about his own age came and threw himself down beside him. The newcomer flung his cap down on Pepparkakor, who wagged his tail sleepily in answer; then he lay panting for a moment for he had run far across the beach. He talked between gasps of breath and as though he had news of the greatest interest. He was Axel Jensen, Nore's greatest friend.

"I'm going to Stockholm for midsummer, and you're going too. We've talked of it so many times and now the chance has come—an invitation from mother's friend, Fru Strom, who has the Konditori; she wrote a note which came by this afternoon's boat," he panted, throwing a great handful of sand on Pepparkakor. Then he took a deep breath and went on.

"The note said: 'Send your oldest boy up for a few days, at midsummer. I've my nephew's cot I can put up in a corner of the shop, and if his friend wants to come, one of them can sleep on the window settle.' "

Axel sat up and pulled on his coat which he had jerked off as he ran along the beach. Nore, too, sat up and looked at Axel eagerly. "I'd like to go well. I should say I would," he said slowly. "Stockholm at midsummer! But it's no use, Ax, I can't go, because I'm selling all the fish I can catch, at a good price, to the summer villa people. Mother mustn't work so hard next winter. I'm trying, she and I are trying to save a bit." He hesitated and then turning towards Axel, he frowned in a puzzled sort of way.

"The rug weaving is such tedious work for mother —and the girls need shoes and clothes—I've got to fish and fish and fish all summer." Axel gave an exclamation of impatience. "Oh bother! Stop talking like an old grandfather," he exclaimed. "You've got to come, you never do anything but fish. We haven't had any fun for ages, you spend the whole summer fussing about how you'll get through the winter. The chance has come and you've got to go." Axel was so in earnest that there was a lump in his throat, but Nore shook his head.

"It's no use, Ax, there's no chance of my going," he said simply.

They started off across the beach towards the

Carlson's cottage, Pepparkakor running around and around them.

"We're not sheep, why are you trying to round us in, old funny Peppar?" laughed Nore, shaking the fair hair out of his eyes. There was a lump in his throat too, but he would not have owned it for the world. He was no baby to cry because he could not have a holiday; rather he was the head of the house.

Axel was in a bad temper, he kicked the sand into a cloud, as they walked slowly along the beach. He would not answer when Nore spoke to him, and though he removed his cap, when they came up to the cottage door where Fru Carlson was standing, he did not smile as was his custom, but stood, frowning.

"Why, Axel, you seem sad, what then is the matter?" asked Fru Carlson kindly, for Axel was a prime favorite with them all.

"Oh, it is because Nore is so stubborn. He will not go with me to Stockholm for midsummer. We can stay with mother's friend, Fru Strom, she has written asking us."

Fru Carlson put her hand on Axel's arm.

"Why, of course he shall go, Axel, write at once to your mother's friend, thank her many times and say that he will be delighted to go. Hjalmar from the castle says that the Essen children are to go to Stockholm for midsummer also, with the Zanders, so you will each be having a holiday in your own way," said Fru Carlson.

"But mother, you know I cannot go, this is the height of the season. Indeed Axel I shall wait till another time," exclaimed Nore.

"You will do as I tell you, I am not in the habit of being contradicted. Understand that you are to go with Axel, and say no more against it."

Never had his mother spoken so sternly to him! Nore hardly noticed when Axel took himself off, running home to write the letter to his mother's friend, with the glad news that they both could come. Nore went slowly inside the cottage and hung his coat on a nail by the door. How oddly his mother had spoken when she had said that the Essen children were to go to Stockholm with the Zanders. "You will each have a holiday, in your own way," she had said. It was almost as though she wanted him to have a holiday because they were having one.

As he turned away from hanging up his coat, his mother stood beside him; he put his arm around her and kissed her, as he always did.

"You never spoke to me that way, before, mother," he whispered, speaking out of his perplexity and pain—"Were you angry with me?" he asked.

The mother held his face close to her's for a moment; she was not demonstrative and her caress surprised him as her rebuke had done.

"No, no," she answered, "or rather angry—not with you but because of the look of care in your

face, because you do not have fun with the other boys."

The color rushed suddenly to his sensitive face. "Mama lilla," he said, "it's better than fun to be out in the air, on the sea, fishing. It's the jolliest thing I do, and oh, you should know of the thoughts I have." He threw back his head and laughed. "Sometimes I think of all that's going to be, when I'm grown up. You are going to have everything. Oh, yes, yes, you are going to have velvet dresses, and the children, oh they shall feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream." He laughed again and Thure, in bed in one corner of the room, laughed also. "What are you going to be, Nore?" asked Marta, calling from the next room.

"An artist if life is kind, you know that well, Marta," he answered as he took up the wood box and went on through to the back of the house. He whistled as he came in again with the wood. Now that it was actually decided that he was to go to Stockholm, he was beginning to be very excited; he lay awake until late that night, in his cot beside Karl. The events of the evening kept going through his mind: the little American girl on the rocks, then Axel's invitation to go to Stockholm, the wonderful city that he had never seen, his mother's reproach, then her sorrow that he did not have as much fun as did the other boys.

Well, he had his dreams!

Perhaps he would see the king, in Stockholm, that would indeed be wonderful! He fell asleep, thinking of this, and did not waken until little Thure called that breakfast was nearly ready, and that they were having pankakar as a treat.

At breakfast the children were full of the news that their brother was to go to Stockholm. Karl offered to lend him his jack knife.

"A jack knife will be of no use to him, in Stockholm," said Marta scornfully. "But you shall have my new dark blue scarf, Nore, the one the wife of the pastor at Boo, gave me for my Name's Day." Marta smiled at her brother as she spoke.

"That will indeed be good," agreed Fru Carlson. "He will need it when he sits out at night to listen to the music."

"They always sit out in Stockholm, at midsummer. Froken Valfried Zander told me so—Oh mother, do you think Thure and Karl and I can go, someday?"

The mother smiled. "Stockholm is not Paradise, as you seem to think it, Marta, but sometime if you are good, yes, I daresay, you can go."

"Someday we will sail down to Stockholm in a golden boat, all of us," said Nore as he went out to his nets which had dried in the fierce early sun.

CHAPTER 3

"En Socker Bagere"

AUDREY was right, the castle was a gloomy place. It was built of stone and stood high on the rocks, overlooking the sea. Gulls flapped their wings about its turrets and harsh-voiced crows screamed ceaselessly at its windows.

"You old crows, if only I had a shot gun and could shoot you all off at one shot, wretched things!" Audrey pulled aside the curtain at one of her windows and frowned at a very impudent crow who seemed to sneer at her. It was two o'clock in the morning and the sun shone brilliantly. Gradually the magic of the scene outside drove away the frown and she stood drinking in the almost blinding beauty of the sea and sky, swept as they were by the magic of a northern sunrise.

"It's gorgeous beyond words, but it's too—too big, it almost scares me," she thought. Then she spoke again to the crow who was perched just near her window and whose loud cawing had awakened her. "I'll get even with you yet, old man, don't you forget it." She drew the curtain together after this

speech and went back to bed. The light crept in at every corner, the dark green curtains doing little towards keeping it out. "It's just day all the time, I'll never get used to it. I wish we were at Newport with granny," she thought, but she knew that was not really true; it was only that she was not quite used to the strangeness yet.

Her very large bed was deeply carved and there were faded red velvet curtains around it. She lay still for some time, staring at a black and gold chest in one corner and at the tall white tombstone-like stove in the other.

"Funny idea having that stove here, it looks so out of place," she thought. "Was she homesick?" she wondered. "Of course she was, but it would pass away, and after all, it was splendid meeting the Zanders, they were all such fun."

Four days had passed since they had all met on the rocks, days of sun and laughter. Twice they had had "coffee parties" on the rocks, and every day they had been in swimming, and she and Valfried had rowed out to catch the swell from the Gustafsburg steamer, as it came from the fjord, into the bay. What fun that had been! She and Valfried were becoming splendid friends. Audrey never tired of hearing Valfried tell of Stockholm in the winter, the strict school that she attended, where she had to be in her seat at half past seven in the morning. "Oh, it's so dark and cold, Audrey, you can't think,

just as black as night; if you stay next winter, you'll see!"

Stay next winter! The very thought was out of the question. Not to see New York, Fifth Avenue, and the girls at Miss Daly's school, and best of all, her dear, kind, busy father!

She looked at the picture of a young girl in white, which hung just in front of her. It was a painting of her mother, done before her debut in Stockholm, before she had married the American and had gone so far away to live and die.

Audrey was rather cross at breakfast the next morning. She and Sven ate alone in the great dark dining room. Aunt Greta had been up for some time.

"Funny this room is always dark, with all the sun outside," remarked Sven cheerfully, as he spread some butter on a piece of freshly baked, spicy coffee cake, and began to eat it with enjoyment.

"The whole place is dark and the people in it have dark souls," exclaimed Audrey, taking a savage bite of bread and butter. She often made remarks like this and her brother, being used to them, went calmly on with his breakfast.

"Nice thing to say about your relatives, hope you don't count me in, you seem to have a grouch. What's the matter with you, aren't we having a peach of a time?"

"I didn't mean that our relatives are wicked, I

mean they're sad. Yes, it's great fun being with the Zanders. I'm keen about going to Stockholm with them next week, aren't you?" asked Audrey, cheered by her breakfast and inclined to look on the brighter side. She felt that Sven could not understand many of the things that troubled her, he was so slow and matter of fact. The gloominess of the castle and the cawing of the crows did not disturb his sleep.

"You and Bjorn might try to do something about the crows, they're mean, impudent creatures. I'll never get used to their screeching. Isn't it funny here, Sven?—And, oh dear, if we could only make Aunt Greta laugh more, she's only laughed the one time when you and I danced the cake walk, down the hall and grandfather—why they both of them just stay in, all day. They just sit by the fire and Aunt Greta knits and knits, and every time we speak grandfather mutters, 'Sigried's children, Sigried's children!' "

"Grandfather likes to have you around, just the same," answered Sven, pouring some cream on his porridge. "You've made him laugh several times, especially when you told about the time we took granny in the subway, for the first time."

"I'm going to wake grandfather up this summer, see if I don't—Aunt Greta too, she's a dear, really. She just needs to be happy, she needs to be interested." Audrey said this last over her shoulder as they left the dining room, and Sven replied, as they went

out of the great hall into the morning sunshine, "You can wake her up, if it's possible for any one to do it, sis."

They were to sail with the Zanders and after a kiss for little Astrid, Audrey sat down between her and Valfried and watched the boys as they worked at the sails. The wind was brisk and just in the right direction and the sea as blue as Valfried's eyes.

"We have to sew, this afternoon, Astrid and I; we can only sail for an hour or so, but we do want to talk about Stockholm. We're so glad you and Sven are going with us. We're to open the flat on Strandvagen—won't it be fun, showing Stockholm to Audrey and Sven, Bjorn?" Valfried laughed as she spoke, giving Audrey a little hug.

"Sit tight, girls! Yes, it will be fun. I'm going to take Sven over to the navy yard."

Astrid spoke up shrilly. "I'm going, too, and I'm to have a pistache cake with whipped cream on the top of it. Mother said I might." Then she began to sing in her funny, little, high voice. Astrid was only eight years old but she liked very much to be the central figure. This is what she sang:

"En socker bagere som bord i staden,
Han hakar kakarna hala dagen,
Han bakar stura, han bakar smo,
Han bakar nogra med socker po."

"It's a nice song," she said, turning to look up at Audrey. "It's about a lovely baker who just baked cakes all day long. Little ones and big ones." Astrid leaned over the side of the boat, trailing her fat little hand in the water, as she sang. The wind had come up briskly and Bjorn was busy trimming the sail. A moment later they entered one of the narrow water ways and Bjorn called out a greeting to a boy who was coming towards them in a row-boat. It was Nore.

No one ever knew quite what happened next except that there was a sudden sound as of something tearing, then a harsh creaking and quicker than thought the back mast tore away from the boom and little Astrid was flung violently into the water. The force of the mast, swinging back, although it did not hit Sven or the girls, threw them back against the far side of the boat. They were unhurt and, like a flash, both Sven and Bjorn turned to leap after Astrid. Someone was quicker, however. Nore had jumped from his boat, caught Astrid as she rose to the surface, and was treading water, holding her in his arms, at the side of the boat, almost before one could breathe.

Bjorn, seeing that Astrid was safe and that Sven was helping them into the boat, bent his energies on fixing the sail. They were still in danger.

The boat rocked violently. There was a sharp side wind which caught it. Bjorn gave Sven quick

directions and after a moment, Nore was able to help too.

The sail was fastened as securely to the boom as two pairs of strong boy's hands could make it. Then Bjorn cleverly brought them close to Nore's rowboat, which Sven fastened to the sail boat, and Bjorn steered them safely into the open bay, towards home.

Astrid cried at first but not for long. Audrey wrapped her jacket around her; putting Bjorn's on top of that, she held Astrid close to her and Valfried sat close, on the other side, so that they could keep her as warm as possible. Audrey trembled but she hoped no one noticed it. She was not as used to the sea as were the Swedish children, and she had been badly frightened. Valfried, too, had had a scare and reproached herself that she had not taken better care of her little sister.

Bjorn was very angry. "If she got what she deserved she would be well whipped when she reaches home," he muttered.

"Why should you blame Astrid because the mast broke away?" asked Audrey. Astrid was a great favorite with her, already.

"I do not blame her for that but she is very disobedient. It is always the same way. She does not do anything I tell her when she is in the boat. She was leaning way over the side of the boat; I saw her but I had no time to cry out as the mast broke from

the boom. I shall never take her sailing again. She has spoiled the morning for us."

Astrid did not seem greatly alarmed by her brother's remarks, and now that she was safe, with Audrey's arm around her, smiled on them all, though she was wet to the skin.

Audrey looked at Nore. He, too, was dripping wet and the water ran down his hair and face. He looked at Audrey and smiled shyly but did not speak. He was thinking what an adventure he would have to tell the children! The American boy was about his own age, and had such a friendly, nice face; and the girl was the most interesting human being he had ever seen. Her shaggy, black hair, the life and sparkle in her odd, brownish grey eyes! How different she was from any one of them!

Nore would not stay when the Zander children entreated him to come to Sunhem, their summer villa, and see their mother. "She will want to thank you, herself. Think what you did, Nore, you saved Astrid!" exclaimed Valfried as they all stood on the shore, together.

"I was only a minute quicker than the boys, because they had the boat to manage. It was really Bjorn's good work that saved you all from a ducking, at any rate, Froken Valfried," he answered, as he jumped into his boat and started off. Bjorn had thanked him warmly and said as he rowed away: "He's more at home on the water than on land. He's

queer, I mean he likes to go off by himself, a good deal. He taught me to sail, he's a good fellow."

Audrey waved goodbye to Valfried who was hurrying the dripping Astrid towards the large green and white villa which was their summer home.

"Oh Sven, isn't Nore sort of like a story book person?" exclaimed Audrey as they made their way up the rocks. Sven answered vaguely. As a matter of fact he hardly heard what she said, for he was writing, in his mind, an urgent letter to his father, asking if he could have a sail boat. He went on around the side of the house to find Hjalmar, and Audrey climbed the castle steps and ran on through the great hall to a little sitting room.

Tante Greta sat by the window, sewing. She was a delicate looking woman, her fair hair was touched with grey, she had a gentle, pale face. About her shoulders was a soft, blue-grey shawl. She looked up as Audrey came in, and smiled faintly. Audrey at once told of the morning's excitement, and was immediately sorry, for her aunt at once grew nervous and said that they must not sail at all if they were not more careful.

"Your father has trusted you to us, your grandfather and me. He surely would not approve of the sailing," she said.

Audrey laughed and going to her aunt put her arms around her and kissed her. "Dear Tante Greta, the sailing is almost the most wonderful part

of our being here, it's next to seeing you and grandfather." She gave her aunt another hug and went on impulsively. "Oh, Tante Greta, I wish you ever had any fun, you just sit here day after day. I know your eyes trouble you but I don't believe the sunshine would hurt them. Oh I'd like to take you home with me. when we go back. I'd like to take you for a ride on the top of a Fifth Avenue bus at half past five on a Saturday afternoon when the matinées are just over. We'd have chocolate at Maillard's and then go back to the hotel for dinner and then—" Audrey reflected a moment, "then we might go to Ringling's circus at Madison Square Garden in the evening."

Audrey paused for breath and Tante Greta gave one of her rare little laughs.

"It's sweet of you, child, to want me to go back with you; but I do quite well as I am, and I could never leave your grandfather." She smoothed Audrey's arm gently as she spoke. After Audrey had left the room she stood for some time at the window, looking out, her work falling idly at her side.

"I always felt that Knut Carlson knew something," she thought. "I wish I could have seen him after he came back that last time, but of course there was really nothing he could have told me." She sighed as she turned away from the window, but as she stooped to pick up Audrey's hat which she had

dropped and forgotten, she smiled. How different indeed was the little American niece from any child she had ever known, how quickly she spoke and moved, how impulsive she was!

"I am glad indeed that Sigried's children are here," she thought, as she went on out to the balcony in answer to a querulous call from her father.

CHAPTER 4

Making Friends

SVEN went off with Bjorn after supper that evening and Audrey had coffee alone with her aunt and grandfather on the balcony which opened from the library. The old man was well wrapped in shawls and his daughter tucked a fur rug about his feet. He fretted a good deal about the air being too keen and kept them busy adjusting cushions and screens until things were just to his liking.

Tante served coffee and with it they had freshly baked coffee bread; it had an odd flavor of annis seed which Audrey was trying to become accustomed to. She liked having coffee out there with her aunt and grandfather. Audrey was fifteen but she was still young enough to enjoy doing grown up things. Her aunt made her coffee quite weak by putting in plenty of cream. It was sweet and fragrant and she drank it each evening out of a red and gold cup with a red and gold dragon on one side. It had belonged to her mother and Tante Greta had given it to her.

"Tell me, Tante Greta, tell me about when you and mother were young; you must have had splendid

times, running all around here. I wish I had a sister, Sven is all right of course, but he doesn't like to pretend or make up plays. He just wants to do something all the time and while he's doing it he never thinks of anything else. Why, when he was collecting stamps it was awful, he just wouldn't talk of anything else. It's sail boats now. Tell me, Tante, did you and mother have great fun when you were young?"

Her aunt glanced a little uneasily towards the old count. "Your grandfather does not like to talk of the past, it worries him," she whispered. Audrey was silent for a moment and then she stood up and came over to the old man. She sat on the stone railing opposite him, tossed the dark hair away from her shoulders and smiled at him.

"Goodness, grandfather, why on earth are they all so afraid of you? Any one would think you were Bluebeard or the cross old grandfather, the sort of witch-like old man in the Green Fairy book. Why, I like you, I think you are rather a dear."

Tante Greta gazed, in silent amazement at her daring, and the old count chuckled.

"So, I might be an ogre or a Bluebeard, is that it, young America? Well you're outspoken anyway. You don't seem to share the shrinking of the rest, you're not afraid of me, eh?" He glared up at Audrey rather fiercely from under his bushy brows. He had a fine head and face but he looked ill and

very old and there was a listlessness about his whole appearance. "It's just as though he doesn't care about anything," Audrey thought. She met his look quite bravely. "No, why should I be? You seem a very nice old man to me, besides you're my grandfather and a part of mother's life. I do think you're rather selfish and certainly you are, all of you, well, sort of funny, even Hjalmar seems—oh, sort of solemn and different!"

"Hjalmar too, aye. Well we must all of us do better, we must try to make more of an impression. But it's cold here, it's too cold, help me in, Greta, you should not have urged me to come out at all," said the old man, suddenly remembering himself and his ills. His daughter helped him to go inside and then turned back to speak to Audrey.

"He will want me to read to him for some time; can you amuse yourself, älskling?" she asked. Audrey assented eagerly. "I'll just look around for a little while," she said. Her aunt went inside and she ran down the balcony steps and stood for a moment looking off at the sea. Then she began to climb down the very steep rocks, down, down to where her own new, white rowboat lay rocking at the foot of the cliff.

The bay was very quiet. She unfastened the boat and jumped in, shoving it away from the little stretch of sandy beach, with her sunbrowned hands. There was something very exciting to her in going

off this way for a row. It was so new to her, so mysterious: the wonder of the sea and sky, the odd dark water ways, so narrow, so silent, then the wide open stretches of sea, sail boats in the distance, the voices of children, music from nearby villas. It was like a dream.

She felt full of energy in the evening air and she rowed for some time before she began to realize that she was a little tired. She drifted lazily for a little while and then came to herself with a start for the boat was bumping against some rocks. Audrey decided at once to explore them. She liked the feeling of being quite by herself in a new place, so she jumped out and managed with a strong pull to bring the boat safely on shore.

"I don't want you to go sailing off and leave me, Mr. Boat," she said. Then she began to climb, scrambling higher and higher until she found a nice little crevice where she seated herself comfortably. There were a few black clouds in the sky and all around them glowed the purple and scarlet of the summer night. There was a wide open bay in front of her, tinted faintly to palest green and pink and grey, and in the distance there was a sharp outline of pines against the beauty of the sky. Some brown sails flapped lazily in the middle of the bay and a boat from Stockholm was stopping at a landing far on the other side. She could hear the noise it made as it churned the water.

After a while she stood up and began to wander about the rocks. Tante Greta would be worried if she were gone too long but it was so enchanting there in the chill, sweet, wonderful air, with the sea and the rocks all about her. She began to think of her especial girl friends in New York. What would they think of the castle, her grandfather, Tante Greta, Hjalmar, all the funny new ways and things. Quaint Hjalmar who had said he would tell her stories. She stooped and picked a handful of purple and gold flowers that grew in the sides of the rock, clinging so close to the rough granite. How wonderful that was! The delicate bits of color growing, no one knew how, out of the very heart of stone.

A row boat was coming close, and she watched it idly. It was a fishing boat and she could see the dark nets, so heavily laden that they hung far over the sides of the boat. As it came nearer she saw that a boy was rowing and after a few minutes she recognized Nore. She sat down on a ledge and watched him; he could not see her for the light was almost blinding as he came towards the sunset. He tugged at his boat after he had jumped on the rock, for it was heavy with its burden of fish. Then he sprang lightly up the rocks as though they were old friends of his and as though he had often come to them, before. Audrey could see him only now and then for jagged boulders stood in her way but suddenly as he jumped onto a very high white one, he saw her, and

smiling with surprise, he leaped across two rocks between them and stood before her. He bowed in his odd ceremonious way and said:

"Good evening, Froken."

"Sit down and let's talk for a while, I've wanted to talk to you ever since the day we sailed and Astrid fell in the water. Do you think it queer that I should want to talk to you?" she asked in her direct way. Nore sat down on the rock beside her and clasped his brown, slender hands about his knees. "Why, yes," he answered simply, "it's odd that you should want to talk to me. It's different with me for of course there are so many things you and your brother could tell me. I've never been anywhere or seen anything."

His English was quite as good as that of the Zander children and as though he guessed her wonder, he smiled, saying, "It was Bjorn Zander who really taught me my English, though of course I've had some in the school at Boo. I taught him to fish and sail and he paid me with English. We've talked a good bit when we've been off together."

"That is splendid. Bjorn is slow but he is good, I'm sure. I'd like to tell you anything you'd like to know. I can tell you about New York and all, but if you don't mind, I'd like to talk about Sweden tonight. You see it's all so strange to me and no one seems to understand. It's just home to the Zanders. I mean

not odd or different at all. They've never known anything else, neither has Tante Greta. Oh I know you haven't either but I think you'll understand. You can imagine things, can't you? You can tell me of the old legends, the old, old things."

Nore turned and looked at her. His pale face brightened. It was rather a cold face, oddly careworn in spite of his youth. When he smiled as he did then, it became at once boyish and happy. Still with his hands clasped about his knees, he turned and looked at Audrey. "Why, Froken, what sort of a friend could I be for you? There is so little I have seen, so much I have to learn. I only fish—and dream." He looked off at the sunset-tinted sea as he spoke.

"Well, couldn't you tell me about your dreams," laughed Audrey. Then she went on, speaking eagerly. "You see that's just what I want to hear about. I want to feel that it's like a fairy story here. I want to imagine these are enchanted islands. It's fun. I'm very fond of Sven, of course, but he never could imagine anything!" She laughed and so did Nore. He seemed suddenly to lose his shyness and soon both children were talking busily. Nore told of the dark, silent, icy days when the Zanders and all the other city folk had left. He told how he and the other children crossed the fields on their snowshoes until they came to the narrowest fjord and then how they went over the narrow, dark, ice-

covered water, still on the shoes, until at last they came to the little school house at Boo.

"It is a long way and a hard way but you see there are no neighbors to help us. Old Gustaf Mamburg had a sledge and a funny old horse but the poor animal died. That was sad for us because sometimes Gustaf would drive us all the way. He is a good man, old Gustaf. Often of an evening he and Hjalmar come to us. Then indeed we have a pleasant time for they have many things to tell of the strange things at sea. Sometimes they come for supper. Except for Gustaf and old Hjalmar we are so alone. There is no village nearer than Boo, no one at all except the Jensens and ourselves. I mean no children for school, just fishermen. I'm not going to school next winter, I'm going to have work." Nore flushed slightly as he spoke. "Gustaf Solson is going to let me help in his butcher shop. I make a good deal with the fish but it's not really enough to carry us through the winter, even with mother weaving carpets for a shop in Stockholm."

Before Audrey could answer, Nore pointed to an oddly shaped gold cloud in the sky. "Isn't it like a boat?" he asked. "I so often dream of boats when I'm sailing at sunset. I like to think I'm in a sort of enchanted boat that is sailing through an unknown sea, one that no one has ever seen before. I like to imagine that I'm a strange enchanted person, not a prince for I wouldn't care about that but someone

who has done and seen wonderful things." He stopped speaking suddenly. "It sounds very childish, but when you're off alone, fishing as I am, most of the time, you get to thinking and imagining."

"I have thoughts, too, though I'm almost never alone, but they are not as interesting as yours. Only since I've come to Sweden, some way things seem so, —well I can't explain, so strange and so utterly different from anything Sven and I have ever known. It's sort of what you dream about and yet never really expect to see, the strange light at night, the queer fjords, the castle, the odd way of speaking and doing things, Tante Greta and grandfather, old Hjalmar, no one caring to hear about America and yet everyone being so polite and kind!" Audrey paused, out of breath. She spoke so quickly that it was a little difficult for Nore to follow her, though he listened carefully. At any rate, she had been able to unburden her mind and she felt the better for it.

Nore looked for a moment at Audrey. She wore a white dress and a scarlet and white sweater, her grey-brown eyes were bright with the interest of the moment, her short, black hair stood out about her tanned, eager, intense little face. "She looks like America as I've thought of it; she is very, very different from us and yet she understands," he thought.

The stars came out faintly as though they did not dare to shine in the midst of so much gorgeous color.

Some peasants going by in a boat for a picnic farther on sang as they rowed by.

"I must go, it is late and Tante Greta might worry. It seems so odd, the brightness all the time, light, light, light. Oh, I do want to hear so many things! You tell me about Sweden and your dreams about the islands and I'll let you take my books if you like. I've ever so many."

"You are kind, Froken Audrey, indeed it would be good to read. I have more time in the winter; when I come back at night from Gustaf Solson's shop, winter evenings, I can read and study. There is a verse I read in an American book of poems that Fru Zander gave me once on my birthday, I like to think of it when I watch the stars:

" 'Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning yet tender.
And as the soft stars shine
On the dark Norway pine,
On this dark heart of mine,
Shone their soft splendor.' "

"That seems just like here, doesn't it? I've watched the stars from the castle windows at night, they are —they almost frighten me." Audrey stood up as she spoke and they climbed down the rocks. Nore

knew them all so well he never missed his footing, and he helped Audrey over the most jagged ones. When they reached the boats he helped her in and shoved her boat off for her. She held out her hand to him. "Nore, we're friends, aren't we? It's been so nice to hear about things. You make Sweden seem so mysterious. Let's be really good chums, you and I. You'll like Sven, too, when you know him, he's slow and funny but he's really a dear."

Nore smiled again, he was too fine to tell Audrey that he was but a fisher lad and that she was the Count Essen's granddaughter. "It would mean a great deal to have you and your brother for friends, thank you indeed. You have given me new thoughts. Some day perhaps you will tell me of your own country, I have always wanted to know of it, oh, so much!"

"Yes, and the books, I'll not forget them. 'The Wind In the Willows' is one that you'll be simply crazy about; it's about darling animals that are like people, only far more interesting." She picked up her oars and with Nore rowing beside her, they began their homeward journey. Except for the wide spaces, they could not row together for it was not safe, a large boat might come through and they must be ready for one at any time.

"What a nice boy he is, so different from Bjorn, for he makes me really feel what Sweden is. If only he wouldn't be so formal! Froken! Why that is

the way they speak to grown up people here, it's so funny," she thought as the castle hove in sight and they made for the landing. Nore bowed in his quaint way, jumped out of his boat and pulled her's up on the sand, helped her out, and then, jumping lightly into his own boat, lifted his oars and smiled good-by. She stood watching him as he rowed steadily towards the little shabby hut across the bay, that was his home.

CHAPTER 5

The Name's Day

OLD Hjalmar sat on an overturned rowboat, filling his pipe and looking meditatively off at the lazy, blue sea. He was thinking so intently that he did not see a flying figure coming towards him. It was Audrey. She sank breathlessly down beside the boat on the warm sand and smiled up at him.

"It's my Name's Day, Hjalmar, what a funny idea! Sven and I have been laughing about it, it's so odd to celebrate a day that belongs to your name!"

Hjalmar took his pipe from his mouth. "There is nothing at all amusing in that, Froken Audrey. It is a very special happy time, there is much feasting, you will see." He nodded at her gravely as he spoke.

They were very good friends, Audrey and the old servant. Audrey loved to talk and Hjalmar was an excellent listener. He had picked up a knowledge of English in his travels years ago and he was trying to teach Audrey to speak Swedish.

"It is very bad that you do not know the language

of your mother, Froken," he said to her. "There is no language so wonderful. When it is spoken it is very fine, and when it is sung—ah! then it is the best of all."

"It's a good thing, Hjalmar, that they gave me some Swedish names when I was baptised, otherwise there wouldn't be any name to fit the day. Audrey Bradford could never have anything as interesting as a real celebration in her honor, but Audrey Sigried Maria Bradford is invited to spend the afternoon and have dinner at Sunhem, with the Zanders!"

This was Sigried day and one of Audrey's names was Sigried, the name that had been her mother's.

"Oh, I do wish they had called me Sigried, Hjalmar. It's the loveliest name I know and it was mother's—you knew her when she was a little girl. Was she anything like me?"

Hjalmar shook his head.

"No, Froken," he answered slowly, "no, she was as different"—he pondered for several minutes—"she was as different as a calm from a squall!"

Hjalmar thought always slowly and this was so unusual a way for him to speak that he himself was surprised. He smiled as Audrey's laugh rang out in the sparkling air.

"Oh, you're so funny, Hjalmar," she said. She grew earnest suddenly.

"There are so many things I want to ask you.

Did she and Aunt Greta have jolly times together—Hjalmar, you are not listening to me, you look as though your thoughts were way off. There is something I want to speak to you about."

"Ja, so!" ejaculated Hjalmar.

"Yes, there are many things I want to know about, the castle for one thing, you seem such a part of it!" Audrey folded her hands about her knees and looked up at Hjalmar. She wore a new Peter Thompson suit, with a dashing red tie, her eyes sparkled with the excitement of the day, the sun and the keen salt air seemed to laugh in their depths.

"There is some one I want especially to ask you about," she said. "It is Nore."

Hjalmar knocked his pipe against the side of the boat and looked down at Audrey. "Nore," he repeated, "Nore!" He was obviously surprised and gazed silently at the little red and white clad figure, in the sand at his feet. "Nore!" he said again. Audrey nodded.

"I saw Nore sailing by, far below me, when I stood with Valfried on the rocks, the very first evening I was here, and I thought right away that I would like to have him for a comrade."

Hjalmar knocked his pipe against the side of the boat again and put it in his pocket, then he stood up. "You would be friend with a fisher boy?" he asked. Audrey nodded. "Yes, with Nore," she answered.

There was a bewildered look in Hjalmar's eyes.

"I must go to the farm for the master's milk. He will want it when he wakes from his nap. Good morning to you, Froken." He turned and walked slowly down the beach with a ponderous rambling gait. As he walked he kept muttering, "Ja so, ja so, ja so!"

"Hjalmar," protested Audrey, calling after him. "You haven't answered my questions, you haven't talked at all." She sat gazing at him as he made his slow way across the beach.

When Hjalmar reached the corner that led to the farm, he looked back at Audrey. She was still sitting there by the boat and she was waving to Valfried and the boys, who were running towards her. For a moment Hjalmar stood there watching her and as he turned away he muttered to himself, "Ja so, ja so, we'll trust the good God!"

"The boys only let me beat them, of course, but it's fun, winning," gasped Valfried, sitting down on the boat and fanning herself with her brown straw hat. "Oh, what a day this is," she went on. "It's glorious for your Name's Day, Audrey, I'm so glad. You'll meet the Wicanders this afternoon, I know you'll like them, they're our great friends and they are so wanting to meet you!"

"Are the Wicanders really going to Stockholm for midsummer, too?" asked Audrey. Sven and Bjorn, who had been having an extra race of their own sank down breathlessly on the sand, red in the

face for they had been having a long series of races on the beach, most of the morning.

"Yes, of course, the Wicanders are coming and they'll stay with us. What splendid fun it will be!" answered Valfried. "We'll go to Skansen midsummer night and—"

"Don't tell all we're going to do, how like a girl that is!" exclaimed Bjorn, throwing a great handful of sand on Sven who returned in kind.

"Well, I'll not say another word to Audrey but I know Ingeborg will want to talk to you about it all, this afternoon, Audrey," said Valfried.

What an afternoon it was, there at Sunhem, the Zanders's summer villa!

Ingeborg, Nils and Petrus Wicander were city children whose parents had a villa some way up the bay. They were great friends of the Zanders but this was the first time they had been at Sunhem since the Bradfords came. They had heard of Audrey and Sven because Fru Zander and Valfried had spent the day there, the week before. It was with the greatest interest that they all met that golden afternoon at Sunhem. Audrey knew from the first that she was going to like Ingeborg very much and the young Swedish girl said right away that she had always wanted to have an American girl for a friend.

Was there ever a garden like Sunhem!

"It's not that it's more beautiful than any other, but it might be the garden in a very strange fairy

tale," Audrey said to Ingeborg, as they walked around for a little while, getting acquainted.

One reason for the strangeness of the garden was the great boulders that were scattered through it, among the rose bushes, at the end of a hedge of hollyhocks, down by the spring house. Everywhere they appeared suddenly when one least expected them and they were so odd in shape and so grotesque they almost frightened you if you came upon them too suddenly, running around a corner. To the Bradford children they were fascinating beyond words and after a game of hide and seek, they all climbed up on one, a very big scraggly one, and sat there fanning themselves while they decided what to do next. They had all been invited to spend the afternoon and stay to dinner, which was to be at four o'clock. The Sunhem garden was a wonderful place for hide and seek and they had had a splendid game.

"Hide and seek sounds such a childish game, but here in the Sunhem garden it's really more fascinating than any game I've ever played," laughed Audrey.

"It's because of the rocks, of course," Bjorn said as he lifted Astrid up higher on the big boulder. "We've never grown tired of the game here because the rocks always seem different, there is always a hiding place we never saw before."

"We're growing too old for hide and seek, but

I'll always love it." Valfried plaited her braid of bright hair as she spoke. She was very fair indeed in her white dress with some blue corn flowers at her waist. Fru Zander called to them from the drawing room window, "Lillemore says you will find something to drink in the tree hollow."

"Good enough, I'm thirsty, aren't you, boys?" exclaimed Nils Wicander, a large, fair boy with funny horn-rimmed goggles.

"I hope there is something to eat, too," laughed Bjorn, lifting Astrid down from the rock.

The tree grew very close to the water, so close that its branches trailed over so that they dipped into the water. It was a huge tree and there was a wooden platform built into it. Here Valfried and Astrid kept their special treasures. Bjorn lifted up little Astrid and Petrus Wicander who was so very short and fat that he never could have climbed up himself. "I wish we could do something once in a while without having the children along. We can never get rid of Astrid for a second, she's always around," muttered Bjorn to Audrey as he helped her up into the hollow.

The girls managed to squeeze onto the platform and the boys sat on nearby branches. Astrid was wedged in very tightly but she was happy because she had a cooky in each hand. Lillemore, the very fat nurse of the Zanders, had left a tall jug of fresh milk and a large plate of cookies in the hollow for the

children. They all enjoyed the refreshment for it was an hour before dinner and they had been playing for a long time.

"You're right, Val, we're too old for hide and seek," said Ingeborg Wicander. "In three years now we'll be going to the Cadet Ball, perhaps."

"Oh, what a wonderful thought!" exclaimed Valfried.

"You will wear pink, I hope, Val, and I—Oh, I'll wear white or anything. It doesn't really matter, for I'm not pretty," went on Ingeborg.

Audrey felt a little embarassed when Ingeborg said this for it was true indeed, Ingeborg not only was not pretty but she was quite unusually plain.

"It's the same with me if I wear pink or blue, it makes me look so dark and queer," Audrey exclaimed impulsively. "I shall wear white at my first ball and I'll carry American Beauty roses."

"What about your hair? You'll look an odd sort of young lady with short hair," said Sven.

"Oh, Sven, how little imagination you have! I'll have dusky hair, high on my head and fastened with a tortoise shell comb," answered Audrey and they all laughed.

"Oh, let's talk sense," Bjorn blurted out suddenly, in his blunt way. His mind never strayed very far from boats and fishing. "Of course it's your Name's Day, Audrey, and you've a right to talk of anything you like."

They laughed again at this, it was easy to laugh at almost anything there in the tree, with sunshine all about them and a jolly salt breeze coming in from the sea.

"I'll be a cadet at the cadet school very soon now and then the sea for me," said Nils Wicander.

"I'll be one, too, some day," piped up his little brother Petrus. They laughed again at this, for Petrus was so little and fat and had such a moon-like face that the thought of him in a cadet uniform was very amusing.

"Nore Carlson is always on a boat or in the sea, he would be a better sailor than any of us," said Bjorn.

"The sea tells him things, he sees pictures in the sea," exclaimed Audrey. She stopped in confusion, for she had forgotten that no one knew of her acquaintance with Nore. Astrid had nearly fallen out of the tree and so no one noticed what she said at that moment. She was glad, for it was sort of fun just having it a secret for awhile.

"I'm going to keep a Konditori for awhile when I grow up," said little Astrid suddenly. "Then I can have all the cakes I want all the time." She ate her fifth pepparkakor, as the cookies were called, and smiled sweetly at Bjorn when he frowned at her, saying disgustedly, "I'm ashamed to have Audrey and Sven see how greedy you are."

Old Hjalmar opened the gate that led to the

Zander villa and walked slowly around the winding garden path. When he saw the old pastor, the Zander children's grandfather, sitting in the sun in front of the villa, he quickened his pace. The old man heard his step on the path and looked up. When he saw Hjalmar he smiled and motioned to a chair near him on the grass, but Hjalmar shook his head.

"Good evening, pastor."

"Good evening, Hjalmar, and welcome to you."

"I've come but for a moment, sir, and I've nought to say—leastways—I'm worried in my mind."

"That's a bad way to be. Could you not tell me your trouble?" said Pastor Zander. He was very old and he had retired long ago from his pastorate in the south of Sweden. He had never preached in that part of the country and only came there in the summer with the family, yet the people in Boo, the nearest village, knew him well and often brought their troubles to him.

Hjalmar made an odd figure in his rough trousers and red shirt, his spectacles were somehow so out of place with the rest of his appearance.

There was a moment's silence and then Hjalmar said slowly:

"The young Froken has cheered the master a bit, twice she has made him laugh." Hjalmar spoke wonderingly, as though the fact of his master's having actually laughed were beyond credit.

The pastor nodded. "She is a bright child, she is

full of the country across the sea, a country, Hjalmar, that you and I will never know."

Hjalmar, too, nodded. He was slow thinking and he could not make his mind wander at once to America.

"The master is keen, you know; he wanders at times and he broods over the past, but—I don't know, maybe he thinks a good bit; yes, he's keener than we know," Hjalmar spoke as though he were thinking out loud.

"I never knew him in the old days, Hjalmar, never knew the family until the past few years, since we have come here for our summers, but I do feel that there has been trouble and sadness at the castle on the rocks and all in good time, perhaps, maybe you will tell me of it and, who knows, perhaps I can help you. For whatever the trouble is, Hjalmar, it has hurt you, too."

Hjalmar's face worked curiously for a moment, he cleared his throat and then spoke more cheerfully.

"Well, I'll be going on. I only wanted to wish you a pleasant day, a word with you does cheer a body, sir." He tipped his cap and started away down the path, then he paused a moment and looked back.

"It's a big worry, one of the gravest a man ever had, sir," he said and with this remark he walked slowly away.

The voices of the children in the tree came to the

old man as he sat there in the sun with Jacken at his feet.

"Our play days are over, Jacken," he said to the dog and he was right. Jacken could go for a picnic, sail in the boat, comfortably curled under the seat, he could sit at Astrid's feet at supper and devour the choice bits that were given him, but he could not enter into their play as once he had done; he was too old.

Lillemore appeared suddenly under the tree and called up that supper was ready. She was so fat and her face was so very red that in her purple frock she looked not unlike a large purple plum. None of the Zander children thought her odd looking, for they loved her dearly and were so used to her bigness and redness they would not have had her otherwise.

Dinner was served outdoors back of the villa. There was a stretch of blue and gold sea in front of them, a long table set with white and gold dishes was placed just where one had the best view of the sea. On the table was a white embroidered cloth and in the center was a white bowl filled with blue corn flowers and wild red poppies.

"Oh, I love them, it's so beautiful—the flowers and everything," exclaimed Audrey, putting her arms around Fru Zander, who escorted her to the seat of honor, next herself, at the head of the table.

Bjorn and Sven had carried out the long green benches from the veranda and they all stood for a

moment quietly, as, at a nod from her mother, little Astrid folded her fat hands, bowed her head and said a little grace.

Fru Zander had led Audrey to her seat but laughingly told her she could not sit down until she had had the smorgas. She gave her a plate and gave one to each of the other children and they all went up to a side table near the veranda. Little Astrid was so excited she jumped up and down. Holidays always affected her this way.

The long afternoon of play in the salt air had made them very hungry. The side table was covered with plates of cheese and fish and little hot omelettes. To Audrey and Sven it seemed an odd way to begin a meal, standing up and eating cheese and fish on the hard grey Swedish bread, but this was the way one always did in Sweden. There were so many kinds of fish and cheese it was rather hard to choose, but the lobster omelette was delicious and Sven enjoyed a mixture of anchovy and egg spread on the hard bread. All this was before the regular dinner began and soon they were seated each side of the long table with Fru Zander at one end and Herr Zander, a jolly, stout, kind-faced man, at the other. Two smiling maids, assisted by Lillemore, waited on them. Jacken came and sat beside Audrey as though he realized she was the guest of honor. Astrid sat on the other side of Audrey.

"When the efterrätt comes you're going to have

presents, but don't say I told you," she whispered excitedly to Audrey, who knew that efterrätt meant dessert. She had learned some Swedish words and wondered what her American friends would think if they could hear her say them.

"After all, it's my country too; it seems strange in some ways, but it's partly mine," she thought, looking about at the happy faces, at Fru Zander, very sweet and motherly in her white gown. How kind they were, all of them.

The fresh salmon was delicious. It was served with peas and carrots, cooked together in the Swedish way, then came crystal dishes filled with raspberries and frozen cream.

"Now the presents are coming," whispered Astrid, as Lillemore put a tray down in front of Audrey. The color rushed to Audrey's face and she sprang to her feet. She looked very radiant, eager, and happy as she stood there in her white frock, the scarlet sash about her waist.

"Oh, you are all so kind, so good. How can I thank you? You've all made us feel at home when everything was so strange." She spoke impulsively, stammering a little in her emotion, and she looked at Fru Zander, who smiled back at her understandingly, for she realized that Audrey was having some of the things she had missed in her life, home and fun and companionship.

Bjorn forgot to be bashful and stood up. Holding

his glass of saft, like our raspberry vinegar and looking at Audrey, he said:

"Skoal." The word means hail and it was used in the old days by the vikings. They all drank Audrey's health and looked at her while she opened her presents. Fru Zander had given her a little brooch such as the Lapp women wear. It had three little gilded sprays, and it was fastened with a clasp, underneath. Audrey was charmed with it and saw herself wearing it before her especial girl friends in New York. How foreign she would look!

Astrid had made her a white kerchief to wear wear about her neck with the Swedish dress she was to buy when they went to Stockholm. They were looking forward to helping her pick it out. Astrid could sew very nicely, though she was only eight years old.

Valfried's gift was not done up at all. It was a leather box and inside were two bright cups and saucers, plates, knives and forks and two blue and white napkins.

"It's for a picnic, when you go off in your boat," explained Valfried.

"It's splendid, thank you so very much, Val. Sven will want it for his fishing trips but he can't have it, I shall sail away towards the sunset with it and then I'll boil the kettle and make some tea."

Herr Zander laughed at this. "What a combination of romance and American practicality you are,

child," he said. Then from his pocket he drew a box of candy which he handed to Audrey. He bowed in the formal, rather stiff Swedish way, as he gave the box to her.

Bjorn's present was "Whaling in Alaska" and it seemed to greatly amuse his family that he had given the book to Audrey. "It's his favorite story. He sent in to the bibliotek by father. He would never part with his own copy," laughed Valfried, as they left the table.

They all went up to Fru Zander and kissed her, saying "Tak fur mat," which means thanks for food, in Swedish. Then they danced. It was fun dancing the klapp dans, all of them together. Finally Sven said they ought to go and Valfried and Bjorn walked with them to the foot of the rocks. When Audrey had said good-bye to Fru Zander, she exclaimed: "I love you all, from Astrid to Lillemore. I love Sunhem!"

She stood watching the boys and Valfried as they started back. "Sven and Bjorn are going off on some sort of escapade, I'm sure of it. I saw Bjorn wink at Sven just before he said we'd have to be going." Audrey looked up at the castle but did not seem to want to go to it. Suddenly she saw a young girl coming towards her. She was carrying a heavy bundle and on top of it were balanced two smaller packages. One of them fell off almost at Audrey's feet and she stooped and picked it up.

The young girl had a fresh, smiling face. She had come suddenly around the corner of the rock and when she saw Audrey she grew very red in the face. She had been walking quickly and she was a little overcome at meeting the young Froken from the castle. Audrey smiled at her. She bent over and put her presents under the curve of a rock, all except the box of candy. This she held out to the newcomer. "Have some," she said, and the girl took a chocolate a little timidly, making a courtesy which in Sweden is called a niga.

"Thank you, Froken," she said. "You are indeed kind. We seldom need provision from Boo, but to-night I went there on the boat and, alas, I missed the one back that would have taken me to our side of the bay. Now I do not know what I shall do!" She smiled her shy smile and did not seem very much put out at her predicament.

"Is it just across the bay? Why, I can row you over. I'd love to, I love being out on the bay." She nodded up at the castle that towered above them.

"I'm staying there with my grandfather," she added.

"The young Froken from the castle!" gasped the girl with the bundles. "Pardon, Froken, you could not mean that you would row me across. No, no, I could not permit it, I shall do quite well, I can wait. Soon my brother, who is a fisher lad, will return and then he will come to look for me." The girl spoke

excitedly and in Swedish and Audrey did not understand very much that she said but she did catch the words "brother" and "fisher boy," and she asked the young girl eagerly: "Are you Nore Carlson's sister?"

"Surely, yes, Froken, Nore has spoken of you and your brother and old Hjalmar whom he knew well and who spent his Saturday evenings with him. He, too, has spoken of the young Froken and her brother."

"Well, I'll tell you just what I'll do, I'll row you over and we'll give this candy to little Thure. Oh, you see I know the names of every one of you. I'm tired of the thought of anything sweet, you see I've had a Name's Day party at the Zanders."

She put the bundle she had picked up, on top of the candy box and in spite of the other's protests she took her by the arm and ran with her down to the shore where the white rowboat rocked invitingly.

"Hop in," she cried and in a few minutes the two girls and the bundles were started out across the bay. "I call this boat 'The Swan,' because it's white and because I like the swan boat in an opera called 'Lohengrin,'" said Audrey gayly, smiling at Marta who sat opposite her and whose round good-natured face fairly beamed with pleasure. "What would they say at home, what would they think to see her being rowed across the bay by one of the castle children! Indeed it was an adventure! Could she ever

be thankful enough that she had missed the other boat!" These were some of Marta's thoughts as she sat quietly in the stern of the boat.

The young Froken was very talkative. Her Swedish was a little strange but what could one expect, she had so lately come from America. Did she like going to school in Boo? Yes, but next winter she hoped she could stay home and help her mother with the weaving, but Nore said she must have schooling. Nore read to them at night in winter. Yes, it was cold, they all kept close to the fire. "We keep close to our mother, we all huddle up close to her, and Nore reads and then we have something hot to drink and then we go to bed," she told Audrey, answering her questions as well as she could understand them.

The row was nearly over, already they could see several figures close to the shore, evidently watching them.

"It's Karl and Thure. Yes, and there is Nore, he must have just come home, see he is dragging in the nets!" "Oh, ho," she called, her young voice ringing through the still air. There was an answering shout and Karl ran out towards them through the water. He was barefooted and his laughter as he splashed the water, sounded very loud and it echoed down the beach.

Marta sprang out and before she had finished shoving in the boat, Nore had reached her and gave

one quick pull which brought it high up on the beach. He was bare-headed and his rough fishing clothes were dripping with water and seaweed. He smiled at Audrey but he did not hold out his hands except to look at them ruefully and shake his head. "They are fishy, you see, Froken—Oh, I'm always with the fish, you see; I'm not fit for human beings." He, too, laughed happily and little Thure threw her arms about Audrey before she was even introduced. Audrey knelt beside her on the beach and put her arms around the little quaint figure in her odd shrunken blue dress with its quaint neck-piece of red cotton. She had fair hair which was almost white and like Astrid's, it stuck out each side of her face.

"See what I've brought to you and Karl, yes, to you all, it is a nice big box of candy. We could not eat it at the party because we had so many goodies," she said, hugging little Thure close to her.

"But come, please, that we may thank you and that you may do my mother the honor of making her acquaintance, Froken," begged Marta and so they walked up the rocky way to the hut, little Thure clinging to her hand, Marta on one side and the boys coming behind with the bundles.

Someone appeared suddenly in the doorway of the little fishing hut. It was Fru Carlson who had been taking down some clothes from the line at the back of the cottage. She stood there in the doorway with them flung across her arm, she wore a

faded grey print dress, her face seemed oddly white as she stood there in the glaring light of the sunset. It was a strong face, weatherbeaten by cares and sorrows as well as by the storms that had always raged about her home. When she saw Audrey in the midst of her children, coming towards her, she stood still as though in great astonishment.

Nore reached her first, putting his hand on her arm, as though protecting her from something, he knew not what. "See, dear mother, the Froken from the castle, who in her great kindness rowed poor Marta over across the bay. Marta lost the boat for our side and would still be waiting over the bay had it not been for the young Froken."

"You are indeed welcome here, Froken, and do know that with my heart I thank you for your thoughtfulness. Come, a chair, Marta, put it just inside the door so that the Froken can have the air; it is so full of fish I fear, the room is full of it." Fru Carlson twisted her apron together nervously and Nore looked at her in wonder. He had never seen his mother like this, she was always so calm, so possessed. "No lady has more calmness than my mother," he had so often thought. She was looking tired, the mother, she had seemed sadly worried of late.

They all clustered around Audrey as she sat in the doorway. Nore brought a chair for his mother and the children sat about on the stone doorstep

and on a log that lay near the door. In front of them was the sleeping silver sea, touched here and there with crimson and mauve.

Audrey talked mostly, using her Swedish as best she could, appealing often to Nore for the right word, and very often becoming so mixed up that she had to stop entirely. Karl had read about a circus in a paper that one of the summer visitors had given him, and he had asked Audrey about it. She had at once plunged into a description of the circus at Madison Square Garden in New York, and the children had listened, trying to understand.

Audrey finally threw back her head and laughed. "I can never make them understand about the elephants. Do tell them, Nore, tell them it is true, I've seen twenty-five elephants all dancing in a row."

The children listened in awed silence, even Fru Carlson seemed impressed. "You see, Froken, the children have never been anywhere, they know only here, they have not seen, oh, there are many things that they have not seen—but Nore, he reads and reads." She turned towards her oldest boy as she spoke and her voice deepened.

"Mother knows a great deal, she taught school when she was young and she knows English well, does she not?" There was pride in Nore's voice as he spoke.

"And Nore is going to Stockholm, for midsummer," put in little Thure but Audrey did not hear

her because Fru Carlson had spoken to her at the same minute.

"You find the castle a happy place, Froken?" she asked. Audrey shook her head. "It is the saddest place I've ever seen and yet I can't quite tell why. Oh, I wish you were all there to play with me!" She turned towards the children as she spoke, then she held out her hand to Fru Carlson. "Goodnight and it's been so good to see you all," she said. Fru Carlson gave a niga and answered her gently:

"You have honored us, Froken, will you accept my thanks for the kindness you showed to my Marta? Come, boys, take the other boat and see the Froken home," she said turning to the others.

"May we go, mother, Thure and I?" asked Marta.

"Yes, if you return at once. Go then, it is late for the Froken to be out, they may worry at the castle." She stood in the doorway watching them, Nore and Thure and Audrey in one boat and Marta and Karl in the other.

"Good-night, Karl, good-night, Marta and Nore, good-night, little Thure. Thank you for seeing me across. It's been a wonderful day, my first Name's Day, wonderful. Good-night all of you, see you soon, good-night."

CHAPTER 6

Hjalmar's Story

THE first thing in the morning, when she woke, Audrey thought of the day before at Sunhem, the fun they had had, all of them together, the sunshine, the hide and seek in the garden, the talk in the tree while they ate the pepparkakor, the wind and flowers, Fru Zander in her white gown, the dinner out of doors, the presents, then meeting Marta, the row across, the meeting with Fru Carlson.

"She was polite and kind but she didn't ask me to come again. She wasn't very glad to see me. Oh, I do wish she had asked me to come again!" Audrey slapped her hair rather vigorously with her brush and then ran down to breakfast. There were off for Stockholm in a few days and she wanted to talk to Sven about a number of things.

It grew quite cold in the afternoon and for the first time since the children came the sky was grey. "This is the coldest place I ever saw. Do you know what I'm going to do, Sven? I'm going to ask Valfried to come over and we can go down to the kitchen and make fudge, Val has never tasted it. Old

Margot isn't a bad soul, she won't mind," said Audrey as the two stood in the great hall.

"All right, but I bet grandfather would be hot. He doesn't want people coming here and you know it. No one ever does come. They don't like company, either of them. It's a wonder they ever let us come," answered Sven.

"Grandfather doesn't need to know about it. His gout bothers him and he's gone to bed. I'll tell Tante Greta that I'm going to ask Val and I know she will be glad. She's a dear, she's just too timid, that's all."

"Of course ask Valfried if you like, Audrey lilla," said Tante Greta. So Audrey hurried to the phone, and called up Sunhem.

"Hello, Val, it's Audrey. Can you come over to make fudge to-night? Tante Greta has to stay with grandfather, he has gout, so you come over and we'll ask Margot if we can make fudge." The last was in a whisper.

"You can come? Dandy!"

Sven whispered close to the receiver: "Have Bjorn come for you, early, and then he can stay on."

Audrey rang off and then made straight for the kitchen. She ran down the steep stone steps and on through an archway into the biggest room she had almost ever seen. It had a built-in stone fireplace at one end and great flames leaped and roared in it. The room in spite of its size was quite warm. There

were woven rugs on its stone floor, and warm curtains at the windows. A fat woman with black curls each side of her face looked up as Audrey ran in. She was Margot the cook. She put her hands on her hips and surveyed Audrey in some astonishment.

"What brings you here then, Froken Audrey?" she inquired. Audrey danced about the big room and up to Margot. "I was lonesome. Valfried is coming over and I thought perhaps if we are very careful, you would let us make some fudge."

"Fudge, what then can that be, Froken?"

"It's a kind of candy we make in America. We'll wash up the pans and leave everything in perfect order. Do say we can have the kitchen to-night, it's such a good time for making candy!"

Margot could not make out all that Audrey said, but she was good natured and she was going out for the evening with Magnus, the Zander's gardener, to whom she was betrothed. Margot was named after the wife of a French cobbler, a distant relative, but her name was the only French thing about her. She was large, like Lillemore, but she did not have the latter's temperament, nothing disturbed her.

"Yes, cook what you will. Your American sweets are bad they say, bad for the digestion, but do as you will. I shall be out with my Magnus. We are going to have mulled wine and sweet cakes at the

home of Inge Neilson who is housekeeper to the pastor at Boo. We shall not be back until it is very late."

"Go and phone Bjorn to come right along with Valfried. I wish Nils and Ingeborg were here." Audrey danced about the kitchen again and then began to explore the pantry, Margot having taken herself upstairs to make ready for her evening's entertainment.

"We can make toffy too, I found some molasses, Margot uses it for pepparkarkor. Here's butter, just grease the pans, Val. Now boys, why don't you help too? Margot gave me some nuts, you might crack and shell them. They'll be good in the fudge and in the toffy," said Audrey later after Valfried and Bjorn had been quietly let in a side door, way downstairs, the one leading to the kitchens.

"This is fun, aren't you clever, Audrey! I didn't know you could cook so well. Bjorn, don't just stand around, do as Audrey says, begin to crack the nuts. Oh this apron of Margot's is so funny, it just swallows me up!" exclaimed Valfried, greasing the pans with vigor.

"Here are three more, I'm going to make the boys each wear them. I know Sven, he will smear molasses all over him, otherwise." Valfried shrieked with laughter as Audrey tied a huge green and blue checked apron about Bjorn's neck. "He wouldn't wear that for one second at home," she laughed as

she watched Audrey pour the milk for the fudge into a big sauce pan.

There were heavy foot-steps outside and the next moment old Hjalmar appeared in the doorway. He stood on the threshold of the kitchen gazing in amazement at the sight that met his eyes. Bjorn and Sven, with Margot's aprons tied about their necks, cracking nuts; Valfried and Audrey busy over the fire and already a savory odor in the air.

"Ja so, ja so," he ejaculated. "Ja so, ja so, ja so!" jah so!"

Audrey turned and waved at him from her post by the stove.

"Come and join the party—Hjalmar, you're just the one we want and pretty soon you can have some of the best fudge you ever tasted. Sit down and wait and oh Hjalmar, tell us some stories."

"Come on, do, Hjalmar," coaxed Valfried and the boys put in a hearty, "Come ahead, Hjalmar!"

The old seaman regarded them silently, then he gave a low chuckle.

"You do seem outlandish to be down here." Hjalmar's English was strange at times. "It do be queer, this old place ain't seen anything like you before, no, by the sun and stars it ain't—not even when—not even in the old days."

"A story, Hjalmar. Sit here now by the fire, there's room at this side. Boys, are the nuts ready? That's it, I want them now. Hjalmar, you must pay

for the wonderful candy you are to have, when it's ready, by telling us a story now!"

"What about?" queried the old man, sitting down in Margot's most comfortable chair. He put his hand in his pocket for his pipe, glanced at Audrey, and brought it out empty.

"Hjalmar wants to smoke. He won't be any good for a story unless he has a smoke, will you, Hjalmar?" asked Sven.

"Smoke away then," ordered Audrey, and very soon there was another odor mingled with the boiling molasses and the simmering fudge.

"Tell about some of your travels, Hjalmar," suggested Valfried, sitting on the edge of the table and watching Audrey as she let the chocolate drip from the spoon to see if the mixture was done.

"It's not ready yet, it doesn't string. Yes, do tell about your travels when you used to sail all over the world, Hjalmar," she urged.

The others, excepting Audrey, who had still to watch her cooking, sat up on the huge kitchen table and prepared to listen. Just then there was a loud mew outside the door and Audrey flew to open it. "It's dear little Smörgas," she said, catching the thin grey, rather scrawny animal up in her arms and hugging her. Hjalmar frowned and the others laughed.

"Of all the forlorn objects, Audrey, that cat certainly is the worst," exclaimed Valfried.

"It is bad, bad indeed, Froken, to have so poor

a creature about, a cat, bah, a cat!" The contempt in Hjalmar's voice was enormous. Audrey put the kitten down gently, giving it a little pat, then she poured out a saucer of creamy milk and placed it in front of the little animal.

"You ought to be ashamed not to like cats, they're the dearest things in the world almost. Yes, they are, they're adorable. Magnus gave me this one, he found it when it was half starving. I'd think Sweden was even nicer than I do now, if you liked cats; you ought to, anyway, Hjalmar. All sailors are supposed to think the world of them," she added, turning to look reproachfully at the old sailor who nodded and said gruffly, "That's true enough, it's true enough!"

"Your fudge will burn," warned Sven. Audrey rushed to the stove, rescued the candy and poured it into the pans that Valfried had greased for her.

"Put them outside, boys, and wait, cover them with these tins. That's it."

When the boys came back, Audrey, too, sat on a corner of the table to rest and to wait for the toffy to be ready to pull, and again they begged Hjalmar for a story. He pulled several long puffs on his pipe and then he said, speaking in his usual slow, gruff way:

"I know a funny tale, a queer one, aye." He was silent again, looking dreamily into the hot bed of coals in front of him.

"Tell it, go ahead," urged Sven.

"Yes, do, please," put in Audrey. "All the tales you've told me so far are queer, Hjalmar, but they are splendid."

"This one is the really strange one, Froken," he said slowly. "Strange," he added. "Strange," he repeated again. Then he settled himself comfortably, pulled at his rough grey beard, and began his story:

"It was my first long travel, what is the word?"

"Voyage, I guess you mean," put in Sven.

"It was my first voyage and we had calm waters for weeks and weeks. It was good, aye, good, we had plenty to eat and because of no storms we hadn't so bad work. The first mate was a fine man, so were most all the officers and it was the only travel I ever had where we knew them, those above us, knew them so as to have speech outside of just taking orders. Yes, it was always different, that one time. There was one officer that I knew quite well, the first mate; he had almost broke his leg by an accident. I was near and pulled him out, 'twas nothin', nothin'." Hjalmar waved his hand deprecatingly as Bjorn said, "Good for you, Hjalmar."

"Well, this young mate, he was a gentleman, he came from good family in England. Oh yes, he had good smile and good voice, he gave me little drink sometimes. Oh not much, not much, nothing to hurt. I was young, I was steady—but the young gentleman

—I fear, yes, once in a great while he was little too fond of spirits. It was all there was against him, he was a fine young man. I tell you about that for maybe that was why, maybe that was reason why he saw what he did—but I dunno—I just dunno, maybe not, sometimes I think yes, sometimes I think no." Hjalmar puffed at his pipe and Audrey said as patiently as she could:

"Do go on, Hjalmar, you're getting us interested, hurry up a little."

Hjalmar glanced at her reproachfully.

"One night one of the sailors says to me: 'A storm before mornin',' and sure enough! We paid for our fine weather, yes, sir, we paid—storm, why it was nothin' earthly nor yet heavenly, I dunno what it was—the shrieking and the howling, just like voices. Yes, yes, I had no sleep until late the next day. Things was better and the wind was dying fast. I'd fell to sleep when a voice woke me, it was the first mate. 'Hjalmar,' says he, 'is you awake?' 'I be now, sir,' says I, 'what is it, sir?' Then he told me. I can't give it to you in his words, you'll have to take mine, here's his story:

"We sat long over dinner for as you know, Hjalmar, the storm came suddenly and though we did suspect it some we thought little of it's coming so soon. We had a great talk, and,' "—Hjalmar paused, "an argument was what he said. It all began because of the captain's friend sailing with us.

He was an American and during dinner the captain himself, who was a Norwegian, said something as to America being found first by the Vikings. 'Then Hjalmar,' he says, 'you should have heard the—the' "

"Discussion," put in Sven. "But of course the Vikings didn't discover America."

"Of course they did, why Sven, you must know that. They called it Vinland. Leif, the son of Red Erik, discovered it, he and his men—he." "

"I tell you he did not, Columbus discovered America." Sven had grown red in the face and his eyes were like two blue sparks. Audrey looked at him uneasily. Sven was seldom roused but he had a hot temper when once it came to the surface.

"The toffy's ready. Come on, boys, it will be great fun pulling it. Here you are, go ahead, never mind about who discovered America a million years or so ago. Sorry your story was interrupted, Hjalmar, you can go on, now, if you will, we're really very interested." Audrey pulled her brother unceremoniously off the table. "Wash your hands quickly, both of you, at the sink. Hurry for the toffy must be pulled at once."

The two boys could not help but smile over the toffy pulling, but Sven repeated, "Columbus discovered America," and Bjorn, who was not at all put out, but just his usual slow calm self, replied:

"Don't be stupid, Sven, it's not what I think, it's history. The Vikings discovered America in 986!"

"Be still, Bjorn, how stubborn you are. Do go on, Hjalmar, I so want to know what the young officer told you about the night of the storm." Valfried smiled at Hjalmar, looking not unlike a Viking's daughter, herself, in her white dress and with the long golden braids falling each side of her face.

Hjalmar was not at all put out at the interruption. He chuckled to himself and slapped his knee once or twice as the boys were disputing and he looked at Sven as though he rather liked his spirit. Then he sighed and stirred uneasily in his chair, gazing off, across the bay, through the kitchen window which was opposite him. There was in his eyes the look that the old pastor had seen, the look of deep perplexity.

"Do go on," urged Sven and Bjorn together and so Hjalmar started once more.

"I tell the rest my own way, I'll not try to tell it like the young first mate. His speech was fine and his voice was soft and his words were beautiful, like reading poetry."

"What did he tell you? Hurry!" begged Audrey.

"He told me this strange story. First his speech was of the dinner and the talk about discovering America. There was hot talk, too, just like the young master and you, Master Bjorn. But the captain he kept to what first he said and like you, Master Bjorn, he gave the date. Also he spoke of Leif. It was all in good part. They sat late at wine and those who

were passengers, and they were enough, slept well I daresay; but the first mate and we, the sailors, aye, and the captain, that was a night for us! The mate told me that towards morning when things had calmed a bit, he tried to cross the decks; he had tied a rope around his waist and he was making slow way. There was something to say to them that was aft and he was doing his best. Sudden, he says he saw a light as gold as the sun, only different, and then he saw—yes, this is what he swears he saw—a ship, a long ship, half decked, with sails of green and yellow and red. The boat, as he stared at it, dipped down, down into the great waves, but when it rose up again he saw the red and black shields that hung outside the gunwhale and the prow was carved and painted of the brightest colors. It was a mighty sight, he said, a strange one for mortal eyes!"

"A Viking ship," gasped Bjorn.

"Aye, just that and more. Strange men were on its decks, men with, what's the word—helmets and spears, men in long scarlet mantles. He stared and stared and then quite sudden they were no more there—gone where or how, he could not tell." Hjalmar was silent, drawing long puffs from his favorite pipe.

"What do you think, Hjalmar, was it a dream?" asked Audrey.

"Maybe!"

"Do you think the first mate had had a drop too much? I do," exclaimed Sven.

"Maybe!"

"A Viking ship," repeated Bjorn, more impressed by the tale than any of the others.

"What do you think, what do you really think about it, Hjalmar?" Audrey asked him earnestly.

Hjalmar puffed slowly. "I'd best be keeping my thoughts quiet and to myself. Where's the sweets, little Froken? I want my pay for the story."

The evening ended with laughter, toffy, fudge and good humor. Even Smörgas, the cat, won her way into Hjalmar's affections, and was allowed to sit upon his knee.

That night before Audrey fell asleep she thought to herself:

"Hjalmar believes the mate's story about the Viking ship; he would not say so but he believes it."

CHAPTER 7

On the Way to the City Beautiful

It was a blue and gold day when they started for Stockholm.

"I hope we'll have all sorts of adventures," said Audrey to Valfried as they waited for the white boat to glide up to the wooden landing.

"There are Nils and Ingeborg, see them on the upper deck," called Bjorn as he and Sven arrived, laden with packages. They had hurried down the path and behind them came Fru Zander and Lillemore, the latter carrying two bags and a number of packages.

"Lillemore will not go for a journey unless she is laden with bundles," Fru Zander said laughingly to Audrey. She took her youngest child firmly by the hand as she spoke. She knew Astrid of old and had no intention of letting her out of her sight until they were safely on board.

What fun it was, running up the slippery gang plank with Lillemore calling to them shrilly to be careful. Then waving good-bye to old Hjalmar, who stood waving his scarlet handkerchief from the

landing. Everyone was waving; a number of summer people had boarded the boat at their landing and their friends and servants had come down to see them off.

"You'd think they were going to be gone a month," whispered Audrey to Sven as they stood a little apart from the others. "Even the old Pastor has come way down to the land to say good-bye and he is so lame." Audrey waved to the Zander children's grandfather as she spoke.

"Yes, isn't it funny, the fuss they make about being away for a few days. There is Aunt Greta, see there on the balcony," answered Sven. The boat was passing underneath the castle and the children called out:

"Good-bye, Tante Greta, good-bye," and waved frantically. The Zanders and Wicanders also waved. "After all, it's rather nice, the waving I mean," exclaimed Audrey impulsively.

She was glad of their holiday, poor Tante Greta, and she had given them each ten kronar to spend. "I wish Tante Greta had come with us; she never has any fun," said Audrey to Valfried as the castle and bay faded from sight and they found themselves suddenly gliding through the narrow waterway just beyond.

"Why, I couldn't fancy your aunt being anywhere but at the castle," Valfried replied. "But come," grasping Audrey's arm, "let us hurry upstairs be-

fore Astrid sees us; she is with mother and Lillemore now, the others have gone up."

The two girls ran quickly up the companionway but Astrid spied them.

"Wait, wait for me," she called eagerly, but they were up and away and seated in a far corner of the deck, with the Wicanders and Bjorn and Sven, before her fat legs had reached the top step. She saw them at once and ran towards them. She wore a blue print frock and her flaxen braids stood out each side of her round, excited little face.

"Oh bother Astrid; she is so forward, never willing to stay with mother and Lillemore," exclaimed Valfried crossly.

"We left Petrus home at the villa. Mother said he would do better in the country," remarked Ingeborg, as Astrid settled herself comfortably beside Audrey, quite unconscious of the lack of welcome that awaited her.

"Good idea, wish our mother felt the same," grumbled Bjorn. Audrey put her arm around Astrid's eager little figure. They were great friends, these two. "Suppose you be my little sister while we're in Stockholm," she whispered, and Astrid whispered back, "Yes, you can look after me, but you must let me eat as many cakes as I like." She nestled contentedly against Audrey's shoulder.

The wind flapped the canvas siding of the boat, the sun sparkled on the sea, from below came

the strains of a harmonium playing the Hambo Polka.

A boy came up the companionway with a tray laden with glasses in which was a golden mixture.

"Appelsene saft," he called, and Bjorn beckoned him to come up to them.

"A glass for each of us," he said to the boy. He counted out his change and soon they were all sipping the cool, bitter-sweet drink.

They all hummed the air of the Hambo Polka, the boys keeping time with their feet. Suddenly Bjorn gave a shout and pointed to a big boat. They had come to an open bay and what looked very like a man-of-war lay near them.

"It's one of the boats from the Fort Vaxholm, I think. Let's get a closer look," exclaimed Nils and the three boys rushed off together.

Ingeborg and Valfried were talking eagerly about all they meant to do in Stockholm.

"Audrey will love some of the pictures in the National Museum, won't she, Valfried?" asked Ingeborg.

"Oh we're not going to spend our time in mouldy old places like the Museum or Ridderholm," answered Valfried a little crossly. She was not at all pleased at having Astrid with them and it had ruffled her temper.

"We're going to Stockholm to amuse ourselves, not to moon around tombs. We're going to stay

out on the boats and hear the music and see the wild cats at Skansen and just let old Gustafus Adolphus and the other old kings and things stay where they are!" she went on.

The other girls laughed at this, and so did Valfried. Audrey stood up suddenly. "I've a cramp in my leg so I'm going to walk up and down for a minute. I'm going to see what's below." She smiled back at the other two, and with Astrid at her side, she walked off down the deck. At the far end they stopped and looked down. Way below them some peasants were eating their dinner. They sat about on the floor of the hold or on coils of rope and were eating large pieces of hard bread and cheese. A group of young lads and girls were dancing to the lilting air that an old man played for them on the harmonium.

Who was that—yes, why, could it be? Why, yes, it was Nore! He sat with another boy on a coil of rope, apart from the others. The boy, his companion, had a fat, uninteresting face. They, too, were eating dark bread and something that looked like cold sausage, and they seemed to be enjoying themselves very much indeed.

Nore was coming to Stockholm too! Would they see him there? Why had he not told her?

Suddenly she called softly, "Nore!" He did not hear her, for he was watching a flock of sea gulls silhouetted against a gold-touched cloud. She called

again and then he turned and saw her. His face was lighted by the joy the picture the gulls made had given him. There was a smile on his lips and in his eyes. He showed no surprise at seeing her.

"Froken, did you see the gulls, the gold and white picture that they made?" he asked her. He came nearer so that they could talk with more ease. She spoke to him reproachfully. "Oh, Nore, why did you not tell me that you, too, were going to Stockholm, for that's where you're going, isn't it?"

Axel meanwhile had stood up and moved away to speak to his cousins who were making a merry meal nearby. Nore nodded towards him as he answered Audrey.

"Yes, Froken, it is with my best friend, Axel, that I am going. We are going to stay with a friend of his mother who keeps a Konditori in Ridderholm, that is the very old part of Stockholm, you know."

"I spoke only of my holiday on my Name's Day night, when you and Marta rowed me across the bay. You never said that you were going to have one, too." Audrey had to call over the side of the boat because of the noise of the harmonium and the swishing of the water, but Nore seemed to speak quite quietly, yet she heard every word.

"But it was in your holiday I was interested, Froken," he said, smiling up at her.

"Oh, I do hope we'll all see each other in Stock-

holm, I want you to tell me about the old places, and oh, so many things. Valfried doesn't want to see old things, she says, and I don't really care much about tombs of kings—but the pictures, oh, I do want to see the pictures."

As she spoke of the pictures, Nore's face lightened still more and he nodded.

"I do hope we'll see you in Stockholm," Audrey insisted.

Nore shook his head. "Stockholm is a large city, Froken, there will be many thousands of people there."

"But at the park, Skansen, midsummer night, you'll surely be there then," exclaimed Audrey.

"Yes," he answered eagerly. "Midsummer night, the flames, the stillness and then—the song!"

"I hope we'll see you then," she said. She turned away before he could answer. Sudden tears came to her eyes as she walked slowly back, far down the deck, where the others awaited her. Nore had not answered her in kind, he did not wish to be the comrade she would have him. He had not said that he hoped he would see them all in Stockholm; he had spoken only of the sea gulls and the fire, the great bonfire that they would see at Skansen, midsummer night. She winked back tears, smiled and waved her hand at the others who were calling to her.

"We're coming to Surdetelje where we can buy the

nice little cakes," exclaimed Astrid joyously, jumping up and down as was her way when particularly happy.

"Lillemore's grandmother sold cakes here, years ago," said Valfried, as they all stood close to the railing and watched the boat glide slowly through the lock. The little green, grey village seemed so carefully tucked away among the sheltering pine trees. As the boat stopped, puffing and swishing, at the little landing, a group of little old women came close, calling out their wares. They wore short skirts and funny frilled caps and they looked, all of them, most exactly alike.

"They are always there," laughed Ingeborg, putting her arm around Audrey. "Sometimes I wonder what would happen if just once they should be late for the boat."

"Oh, I do like Ingeborg so much," thought Audrey. "I like her being sort of plain and dark; and when she speaks of pictures and things, oh—I don't know, but I can almost see them. I love Valfried, too," she thought loyally.

"Kringler, kringler, I want kringler," sang Astrid, as Sven and Bjorn ran down the companionway and the others watched them. They laughed and talked with the old women and came away with a big bag of the dainties for which Surdetelje is famous. They were still laughing when they joined the others. "One old dame told Sven he spoke perfect Swedish,"

laughed Bjorn as he passed the bag around. They were soon enjoying the crisp, sweet, twisted cakes.

"Nore Carlson is below, he and Axel Jensen. We've been talking to them," said Bjorn. "I hope he will have a good time. Just think, he's never been to the city."

It was evening when they entered the harbor of Stockholm. Down the bay they steamed and the children watched the ships that lay at anchor, the spires of Stockholm, silver and gold against the startling crimson of the sky. How swiftly and smoothly their boat glided past the navy yard! There seemed to be music everywhere, glorious music, great sweeps of melody.

"That's the Finnish band, they're playing over there." Bjorn pointed to a blur of trees along the shore.

Back and forth, like hurrying little fishes, plied the boats, boats of all kinds and sizes: sail boats, lazily dipping at their anchors, pleasure boats chugging in from their journeyings up the Malar Lake or down the fjords; and always the little steamboats that glide back and forth, constantly, from one part of the city to another, for Stockholm is built on seven islands.

"We're here, isn't it fun?" exclaimed Valfried as the boat glided up to the wharf. Lillemore called to them shrilly to hurry.

"Your mother is waiting, the luggage is waiting,

we must find cabs at once," she shrieked up the companionway.

"I wish Lillemore would stop yelling, she seems to think we're still babies," grumbled Bjorn as he leisurely descended the gangplank, hurrying, however, when he saw his mother.

"I have had a splendid rest," said Fru Zander cheerily. "Now we are really here, has the journey seemed long, dears?" she asked the girls, as they waited on the wharf, while the boys and Lillemore put the luggage into two taxis.

"We're really here," Audrey repeated to herself as they stood there with the almost blinding beauty of the city and the sea and sky about them.

"I'm going to do just as I like, all the time I'm here," said Astrid happily, "I'm—"

"Audrey, Astrid, come." Valfried called them and the next moment they were all packed in between the many bags and bundles and had started along the sea front, across the wide bridge that led from the great palace to the grey square where stood the statue of Gustaf Adolf, that brilliant king of Sweden who once made all of Europe draw its breath in astonishment.

They whirled along so fast that before they knew it, they were sweeping up Strandvagen, a lovely boulevard facing the bay, and after a few minutes found themselves in the lobby of the Zander's apartment house. There was plenty of bustle bringing in

the luggage, Lillemore and the maids calling back and forth. The servants had come up the day before and had put everything in readiness.

Every one in Stockholm lives in apartments, but the Zanders had two and as they were connected by a staircase, it seemed like a real house to them all. The staircase was in the dining-room and from the first, it fascinated Audrey more than anything else in the house. It was painted bright red and it had all kinds of odd little figures on it.

"It's the nicest staircase I ever saw, it's like the garden at Sunhem—different," said Audrey to Valfried, as they stood for a moment in the midst of a varied assortment of bags. Fru Zander had gone on upstairs, and the boys were there, having carried up some of their belongings.

Suddenly Fru Zander's voice called sharply, "Valfried!" The next moment she stood at the head of the stairs, she was quite pale and in her hand she held an open letter.

"Valfried, your Aunt Lisa is ill. Such a pathetic letter. Karl is away and she is all alone, way up there in that lonely Jevla. I must go to her at once. She has had one of those bad attacks again, so far away from home. How can I leave you all, children? But indeed I must go."

Valfried ran upstairs, threw her arms around her mother's neck and gave her a hug. Bjorn stood just behind his mother, his honest freckled face

full of concern, for his Aunt Lisa was his especial favorite.

"Never mind, mother, we'll do finely. I'm the man of the house now, I'll see that they none of them do anything foolish—all except Astrid—I'll not be responsible for her." Bjorn smiled as he spoke and was only joking, but Fru Zander looked worried.

"Yes, I ought to take the baby but, of course, Lillemore is a host in herself. And she has so counted on having the holiday here with you all. She will be good, I'm sure."

Audrey ran quickly up the stairs and she, too, threw her arms around Fru Zander.

"Let Astrid be my little sister, too, while you are gone. I promise to take care of her."

CHAPTER 8

Sun and Shadow

"FROKEN VALFRIED, I've called you five times to come to breakfast," Lillemore's voice called loudly up the red staircase.

"Here we are, the three of us, and sorry to be late," laughed Ingeborg, as the three girls ran down the stairs, and up to the breakfast table, with its blue and white china and its big bowl of cornflowers in the center.

Astrid was just finishing her porridge and seemed downcast. "The boys went to the navy yard and they would not take me with them," she complained.

Audrey laughed as she kissed her and said, "You are to look after me and show me the sights of Stockholm." The boys came in just as breakfast was over, and while the girls ran to put on their hats, they finished what was left of the spicy coffee cake. They had had an early breakfast and had sailed over to the navy school, where a friend of Nils' had shown them around. Sven was full of delight in the city, and when the girls returned, ready for the out-

ing, they all started off in high spirits, Astrid's hand tight in Audrey's.

They walked along towards Gustaf Adolf's Square as Bjorn had suggested they watch the king's guard change. "Audrey and Sven will like that, they've never seen it," he said. "Never seen the king's guard!" Astrid could not believe it, for the first thing she could remember was standing with Lillemore, watching the soldiers. As they all stood there in the great grey square, she waved excitedly when the blue and silver uniforms flashed in the sun, and the guard crossed the bridge from the palace, saluted the soldiers going to take their place to guard the king, and passed on down the broad street. The stately palace gleamed in the sunlight, far across the bridge, and the children walked towards it, stopping now and then to watch the many boats that lay at anchor, and the others that steamed back and forth, under the white bridges.

"Don't you love it, Audrey, the sea and the boats? I don't want to boast, but—I do love my own city, just the best of all. I've seen Paris and Venice and Vienna—but Stockholm is different." Ingeborg looked off across the harbor as she spoke. Her dark plain face was filled with the artist's love of beauty.

"It is enchanting, Ingeborg. I'm learning things, Someway, I can't explain, but I just feel different," answered Audrey. They stood for a moment, watch-

ing the little boats weave in and out amongst the larger craft, and sturdily steam away to far parts of the city. The many bridges gleamed like silver in the sunshine.

Sven confided to Audrey afterwards that he hadn't cared very much for the palace. "It's too gloomy," he had said. "I like to be out, not stuffed up in old mouldy buildings. I don't see any use in having so many rooms, they don't use half of them, any way."

It was not so with Audrey; she always remembered that hour in the old palace.

"It's not really so very old, you know," Nils Wicander explained to her, as they stood together in the throne room. "It's not like Gripsholm up the Malar Lake, or Drottingham—they're old castles. If you like, perhaps we can see them before we go back. We could take our lunch and go off on one of the boats and spend the day. Gripsholm is only an hour from here."

"This one seems old and strange enough for me," answered Audrey, gazing at the great silver throne.

The others had gone on into the next room and Valfried called from the doorway, "Come into the White Sea, Audrey!"

It was well named, this great ball room of the palace, but it was not because of its beauty or its grandeur that Audrey stood for a moment on its threshold and that the tears came suddenly to her eyes. It was because it was here, in the magnificence of the

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famous ball room, that her father had first seen her mother.

"Standing with some officer of the court, in the center of the ball room, she was like a sunbeam caught in marble." Those were the words he had said to her, her practical, unromantic father. "She was like a sunbeam caught in marble." How lovely! The tears were near Audrey's eyes and she hardly heard all that Nils told her of the people coming into the throne room once a year, to the king,—the parliament opening when the pages and the soldiers, the court and royalty made so magnificent a spectacle. Nils had seen it all the winter before, because his father was a member and there had been a box for the member's children.

They wandered through the old rooms, seeing even the private apartment of the royal family, as they were away for the summer in their various palaces along the sea coast.

When they came out again into the sunshine, Ingeborg said something about going to Ridderholm Church but Valfried spoke up decidedly: "We don't want to spend our time in stuffy places."

"I should say not," agreed the boys.

"Should say not," echoed Astrid. "Let's see where there is a nice place for cakes," she suggested.

"Isn't that the museum across the way? Couldn't we go and look at the pictures for a little while?" suggested Audrey.

Valfried frowned. "Two is company, three is none; come on Astrid, we'll go by ourselves."

Audrey looked at her in amazement. Valfried was put out. There was no doubt about that. What was it? She had not seemed at all like herself since they started. "It's because of Astrid perhaps," Audrey thought. "It is because we have to look after Astrid."

"Of course, I hoped you would come, too, Valfried," exclaimed Audrey.

"No, I'll take Astrid to the bird shop, she always wants to go when she's here in town. You and Ingeborg will be quite happy, by yourselves." She took Astrid's hand and the girls could see that she was still frowning.

"Very well," said Bjorn cheerily, quite unconscious that there was anything amiss. "We'll all meet at the Franska Konditori at one. Hurry girls! you can just catch the boat, if you run!"

The girls had only time to wave their hands as the little boat was whistling at the landing at the foot of the palace steps. A few minutes later they were chugging across the wide glistening bay. Audrey stood by the railing, the beauty of the morning all about her. There was a lump in her throat; it had been there since she stood in the doorway of the White Sea. Something dimmed the loveliness of the day. Valfried was cross because she had asked Ingeborg to go with her to the museum. How stupid

she had been, impulsive as always, never waiting to think a moment before she spoke. She had somehow taken it for granted that Valfried would not want to go because she had said she was tired of stuffy places, because she always said she liked better to be out of doors. The sudden idea of the museum had come to Audrey and she had thought of Ingeborg who loved pictures and knew so much about them.

Ingeborg's voice sounded at her side. "Look back at Stockholm On The Islands, Audrey," she said. So Audrey looked back at the proud city, gleaming in the sunlight, touched with silver and gold, the proud palace, and back of it, the dark mass of old Ridderholm.

It was only a few minutes sail across to the museum. They walked up the steps and stood for some time, watching the doves that hovered close to the grey old building. Seagulls walked about among them or hovered near, calling harshly.

Statues of marble and bronze gleamed coldly in the half light as the girls climbed up the stairs to the gallery above.

"We'll only have time to see a few of the pictures now, but we can come again, the last of the week. It's so nice having you all to myself while we see the pictures," said Ingeborg, putting her arm through Audrey's.

They went into the great silent room, and paused

at once before a painting hung near the entrance. It was a picture of David, the shepherd lad, playing to Saul. The lad sat on the floor, a tiger skin about him, playing his harp and looking up with so loving and inspired a glance, at the sad face of the king.

"It's my favorite picture, I've loved it since I was a child," whispered Ingeborg.

After a few moments, they separated, and Audrey went over to a far corner of the room. It was her whim to look at the pictures and ask Ingeborg about them, afterwards. She looked up at the great painting of the mad King Eric and the little nut-selling girl that he made his queen. The face of the man was so sad, so tragic, for he had terrible moods and then only the little Karin, his queen, could comfort and soothe him. It was a wonderful picture but it was not a happy one.

Ingeborg was way off at the other side of the room studying something she was trying to copy. Audrey looked up suddenly and there, not far from her, stood Nore. He was alone, his grey suit seemed a part of the grey room; the startling colors of the pictures seemed to flare like flames in the misty dimness. As he was turning away from the picture of Charles the Twelfth, he saw Audrey at once and came up to her.

"I'm glad you came here, Froken, I was thinking of you because you said you liked pictures—have you seen this one of our great king?" he asked.

Audrey went over with him and they stood under the picture, together.

"No," she whispered. Every one seemed to speak softly in the gallery.

"Tell me about it, Nore," she added.

So Nore told her of the great king who had made all Europe quiver, who had conquered and conquered and who at last was brought home, across the mountains, wounded to the death.

"Do you see his face?" asked Nore softly. "Nothing could conquer him, nothing! It is the face that is the most wonderful. O to paint a picture like that, Froken!"

They stood there together, looking up at the face of the king, lying on a stretcher, a blood-stained bandage about his head. The lonely mountain pass, the few faithful soldiers carrying the litter, defeated at last, straggling back to Sweden across the snow. The only ones to do honor to the great king are a solitary huntsman and his son, who stand with bowed heads.

Just as Nore had seemed to forget her, in watching the seagulls, so now he seemed to do, looking at the picture. But he turned suddenly and said simply, "You are sad, Froken, can I help you?"

How had he known!

"I don't know really why I should be, everything is so happy—but I am thinking of mother. We were at the palace and it was there, in the ball room, the

wonderful White Sea, that my father first saw her. Oh, Nore, I don't know what it is, but something is wrong at the castle. We're not like other families; we're not happy—it's not just because it's all strange to us, it's something else—Tante Greta and grandfather—"

Nore listened intently as he had done on the rocks, for it was not always easy for him to understand her.

"The castle," he said, speaking in his clear slow way, "the castle has a charm for me so great that I have dreamed of it, so many times! The castle has a secret, Froken, I have felt that always—what it is I do not know, but it is there."

"Oh, Nore, if you and I could find it out!" exclaimed Audrey softly but eagerly.

Nore smiled—his rare smile—it lit up his quiet face, making it at once eager and boyish and happy.

"You and I are really friends, do say so, Nore," said Audrey.

"You are the friend I have always wanted," he answered, and she noticed that he did not address her as Froken this time. He had spoken quite easily, as Bjorn and Nils would have done.

Just then Ingeborg came up to them, greeted Nore and then reminded Audrey that they must hurry or they would be late in meeting the others. They said good-bye to Nore and were soon out in the sunshine again, sailing across the bay.

"Nore Carlson looks like an artist. Isn't it odd, for he has been a fisher lad since he was old enough to hold a rod. Yet somehow he seemed such a part of the pictures, there in the gallery." Ingeborg leaned her arms on the boat railings as she spoke. Audrey answered her eagerly: "I feel that too, but it's been something—I couldn't put in words."

They all had a jolly lunch at the Konditori. Valfried seemed to be herself again and the boys were full of their adventures. Bjorn chose a table for them in a corner and told them to order anything they liked. His mother had given him money before she left and he greatly enjoyed playing host. They all chose the same things for lunch.

"Mother would think we were foolish, just chocolate and cakes and raspberries and frozen cream for a meal," laughed Valfried.

"I'm going to have as many, many cakes as I like," crooned Astrid, her round face beaming.

"How can you let people see how greedy you are, it's disgusting," scolded Bjorn. Then he gave their order to the smiling waitress.

"We took Sven up to the top of the Katarina Elevator," said Nils.

"It was better than the Woolworth building." Sven gave Astrid a part of his cream, as he spoke, and she gave him a sweet but sticky smile, for thanks.

"This is the funniest meal, choosing all the cakes

from the counter, taking as many as we like. Aren't they ever afraid that people will be dishonest about it?" asked Audrey.

"Why, no," answered Valfried as they came out again to the street. "No one would ever think of it."

It was a long day of sunshine and fun. The tang of the salt air was everywhere, as was the scent of birch leaves and of flowers, and bright splashes of color, as girls from Dalacarnia went laughing by, up from the country for a holiday.

Lillemore greeted the children a little anxiously at five o'clock when they reached the apartment, a tired but undaunted Astrid in their midst.

"We had a great many cakes for lunch, and I saw the birds, and Audrey and I went to the Bee Hive, and she bought some sewing so she can sew with us when we go home—and—"

"Well, well, Froken Astrid, do not talk any more. I've been fairly distracted you're all so late getting home. Supper will soon be ready, run upstairs and wash," answered Lillemore.

"Do interest Astrid in something tonight, Lillemore, we don't want her with us. After supper we want to get away without her knowing," said Bjorn to the nurse.

"You know very well that your mother wouldn't wish you to be out in the evening without an older person, Master Bjorn," objected Lillemore.

"It's bright daylight, isn't it? I was fifteen my last birthday, wasn't I? When papa isn't here, I'm man of the house, isn't that so?" demanded Bjorn fiercely.

Lillemore had great respect for the man of the house and Bjorn looked so tall and manly and was so in earnest, that she shook her head and only said, "You must come home early, then. It's a bad time now, the city is full of strangers and pick-pockets. You know that as well as I do."

After a jolly supper during which they did ample justice to the Smörgas and the fish omelette, Lillemore suggested to Astrid that she come up and try on the new dress which she was to wear the next night at Skansen. The child was always interested in her clothes, and followed Lillemore up the red stairway, delightedly. She stopped on the top stairs and looked down at the others. "I'm coming right down again, I'm not going to bed for a long time," she announced.

The others slipped out quietly and stood in the entrance hall for a moment, debating what to do.

"We might go to Hasslebacken to hear the King's band play," suggested Bjorn.

"Can we go in a boat?" asked Sven.

"Of course! What do you say, girls?" Bjorn turned to Audrey as he spoke.

"I think Audrey would love the music, but Bjorn, what would mother say!" exclaimed Valfried.

Bjorn hesitated. "It's bright daylight, we can leave before the late crowds come. I don't think she would mind so very much," he answered.

They boarded a boat at a landing near the apartment house and the girls sat on a bench on the tiny upper deck. The wind blew joyously. It was still too early for much of a crowd. From a nearby boat came the sound of many voices, singing. Boats were everywhere, some so covered with birch leaves they looked like the floating tops of trees.

When they reached the pleasure garden, Bjorn found a good table, and ordered chocolate for the girls and Nils, and saft for himself and Sven.

"There's Nore and his friend," he exclaimed suddenly, "there in the entrance way, they're just looking in."

The first strains of the orchestra had begun and the boys, Nore and Axel, stood in the entrance way a moment to listen. They were on their way to Skansen, the great forest park that loomed dark and mysterious, just beyond Hasslebacken.

"Let's ask them to come and join us," suggested Sven, and Audrey felt she had never loved her brother as she did at that minute.

"Yes, do," said Ingeborg. Valfried said nothing and Audrey felt that she would rather the boys did not join them.

Sven went up to Nore, Bjorn following him.

"Come," he said to Nore, "you and Axel are here

for fun, too, come and have some saft with us and listen to the music."

Nore hesitated for a moment, and then turned to Axel.

"Would you like to come, Ax?" he asked. Axel seemed so overcome with shyness that he could only nod his head, so the two boys followed Bjorn and Sven back to the table where the others were sitting. Sven drew two chairs from the table next them and Bjorn ordered more saft and cake while the others greeted the boys cordially. Nore sat next Sven and Axel just behind him. Axel did not speak at all, except to say "Yes, Froken" and "No, Froken," when the girls spoke to him. He knew no English and he was quite overcome at the invitation from the young ladies and gentlemen.

When the music began, Nore closed his eyes. The truth of the matter was that he was very tired, more from excitement than for any other reason. He was seeing all that he had dreamed, at least of Stockholm. Perhaps some day other dreams would come true. His feet ached for he was not used to the hard pavements; he had known only grass and sand and the feel of a boat under his feet.

The music rose to a burst of melody. Audrey and Sven had heard orchestras in New York but they had never heard such enchanting music as that which sounded there in the wonder of the Swedish night. It had grown so cold that people began to wrap

themselves in red blankets that an attendant of the gardens passed around. One rented them for a few öre.

Audrey was soon wrapped up in one and wondered if she looked as odd as did Valfried and Ingeborg in theirs.

In spite of the music Bjorn wanted to talk. "Hope you're having a jolly time in the city, Nore," he said heartily. Nore smiled eagerly. "It is wonderful, I owe it all to Ax." He looked gratefully at his friend as he spoke. Then he turned and listened to the music.

"I wish they'd play the "Star Spangled Banner," said Sven to Bjorn.

"Hush! not so loud, boys! we want to hear the music!" admonished Valfried.

"I tell you what I'll do," whispered Bjorn to Sven, "I'll write a note to the Herr Direktor and ask him if they'll play it as a favor, because there are some Americans here. It will be a surprise to the girls; we won't tell them."

"Do you think they could possibly know it?" asked Sven.

"They might! Perhaps they've learned it so that they can play it when American tourists are here; anyway, I'll see." Bjorn tore a piece of paper from a note-book in his pocket and replaced three post cards, a fish hook, a bar of chocolate and a pair of cuffs links which he had been obliged to unearth, in

order to find it. Then he wrote a few lines on the paper and beckoned to a waiter. "Take this to the Herr Direktor, please," he said.

Sven and Nore became a little acquainted during the intermission. Sven had many questions to ask about sailing and he told Nore that he had written to his father, asking for a sailboat.

"I told him I'd find some way to earn the money to pay him back, sometime. Not that he'd ever want me to."

Nore was more interested in the American children than he had ever been in any human beings before. He had never seen any one outside of the little world up the Skerries. His inner life had been in the dreams he had woven for himself of places and things. Now these children had come, both of them, the boy and the girl, so different from anything he had ever known. Audrey with her impulsive quick ways, her fearlessness, her charm, and Sven with a life behind him that Nore could not fancy, even in his dreams, a life full of independence and rush, of wealth and excitement.

Suddenly the strains of the "Star Spangled Banner" rose on the sweet night air. Audrey caught Valfried's arm in a tremor of delight, then she and Sven rose to their feet.

"It's their national song," whispered Bjorn to Valfried, "I asked the Herr Direktor to play it."

"Oh, Bjorn, we're just children, how did you dare

to do it?" Valfried whispered back. People watched smilingly the two eager faces of the American children. Nore spoke to Bjorn:

"Shall we stand up too, all of us? I think perhaps they would like it." So the other children jumped up also, and stood there with Sven and Audrey until the last strains died away.

How they applauded! "Oh, that was wonderful of the Herr Direktor! How I love him for it!" exclaimed Audrey, rubbing her hands, for she had clapped until they hurt.

"Bjorn asked them to do it, he sent a note to the Herr Direktor," said Valfried, knowing it would please Bjorn to have her tell them.

"That was fine, and it was dandy for you all to stand up with us. We'll do the same for you when you all come to see us in New York and the band at Coney Island plays 'Du Gamla du Friska,' for you!" This from Sven. They all laughed and just then the music caught their voices. It was the Finnish March and the glory of it boomed through the still cold air.

"There's nothing like it in the world!" exclaimed Bjorn. And this was a good deal for him to say, as he did not care for music.

As the melody ceased some one came up to their table and stood by Nore, someone who had been watching him for a long time, ever since he had joined the others at the table. It was a man, a tall man with a dark unusual face. One could see that

he was a gentleman and a foreigner. He touched Nore's arm.

"Who are you?" he asked. He spoke in a low clear voice and he repeated the question: "Who are you, please, what is your name?"

Nore stood up and answered him in his simple way.

"I'm Nore Carlson, sir," he said.

"Where do you live?"

"Up the Skerries, near a village called Boo."

A sudden eagerness came into the man's eyes and vanished as quickly as it came.

"This Boo, then, is the nearest village to your home?"

"Yes, sir, there are only fishing huts and some summer villa; Boo is a few miles away."

"Is there not a castle there, a castle on some rocks?"

Sven and Audrey leaned forward in their interest as the stranger said these last words. Audrey was breathless. If Nore was at all surprised at being thus questioned he did not show it; it was not his way. "Yes, there is a castle there, sir," he answered.

The stranger did not glance at the others at the table. "I beg your pardon," he said to Nore, "the music must have bewildered me." He hesitated, lifted his hat, and turned away. The children watched him until he had quite disappeared out of the entrance gate. They talked excitedly among

themselves as to who it could be. Of them all Nore seemed the least curious, but in reality he was excited. The stranger had had an artist's face, he had shown such interest; what could it mean?

"He must have thought I looked like someone that he knew," said Nore as he and Axel bade good-bye to the others. "It has been a splendid time; we've liked it the best of any of our fun, so far," he said, speaking for his bashful friend as well as for himself. He and Axel then hurried off, as they had promised to stay in with Fru Strom's baby so that she could have a little holiday herself.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the Zander children and their guests were being scolded by Lillemore for their tardiness.

CHAPTER 9

Midsummer Night

"BJORN, I do think it was stupid asking Nore Carlson and that clumsy Axel to sit with us last night."

"Nonsense, Val. Nore is fine. What if he is a fisher lad? We all like and admire him and you know it!"

"Oh I like him well enough—but—well I don't want to be snobbish, but, after all, Ingeborg's grandmother was lady-in-waiting to the old queen; she must have thought it odd."

"Ingeborg and Nils are not snobs even if you are. I'm ashamed to think you're my sister," Bjorn answered Valfried angrily.

"Frukust!" called Lillemore, and the brother and sister turned from the window where they had been standing in the early morning light, and walked slowly towards the hall. Audrey moved quickly away from the open door of the next room, ran down the hall and was waiting by the table when the Zanders came in. She had unwittingly overheard their conversation and she was very angry, so angry that for a moment she could not speak. Then she bade

Lillemore a cheerful good-morning and even managed a smile when the others came in. They must not know that, much against her will, she had overheard them.

Lillemore put a plate of hot "platter" down on the table, little Swedish pancakes of which they were all very fond. There was a dish of wild strawberry jam to eat with the pancakes. Ingeborg and Valfried had put on their best white dresses in honor of midsummer day. Lillemore thought this very foolish. "They will be quite black by evening time, when you wish to look your best," she remonstrated, as the children sat down to breakfast.

All through the meal Audrey heard the others talking and joined in, now and then, herself, but she wanted to be alone. She wanted to think over the strange happening of the night before.

There was an outdoor bazaar at the end of Strandvagen and half the day was spent there. Audrey's head ached a little, the sun was so blinding, the cries of the fruit venders and the pancake men, so piercing. She grew tired of riding on the merry-go-round, and eating slabs of shiny gingerbread, and when Valfried suggested that she and Ingeborg go in and have their fortunes told, she shook her head. "I'm tired, you go in the tent without me." She caught sight of Lillemore's purple dress and found her swinging Astrid, who kept calling: "I want to go as high as the moon, as high as the moon!"

It was cool there under the shade trees and away from the glitter and noise. "I'll swing Astrid, you rest awhile, Lillemore," she suggested and the faithful nurse assented gladly, mopping her purple face as she sat down under a tree with her knitting. Audrey felt happier than at any time during the day. She liked being with little Astrid, enjoyed her delight in the swinging and laughed at her quaint sayings. All sorts of thoughts went through her mind, as she swung the child, back and forth.

The stranger who had spoken to Nore—who was he, why had he seemed so eager and puzzled and hesitant all at once? Nore had answered so simply, "I'm Nore Carlson, sir." Of course, what else could he answer? He was Nore Carlson. If only the stranger had not gone away, if only he had said why he wanted to know about Nore. Valfried—her words of the morning! Oh she must not be angry with Valfried, her new friend who was so kind to her, who was making the summer such a happy one for her. Gradually the anger died out of her heart, and when the others ran to her through the trees and Valfried called joyously, "It's almost midsummer afton, Audrey, midsummer afton," she too smiled joyously. Her headache was forgotten and they all went home to make ready for the evening in the best of spirits.

Lillemore held Astrid firmly by the hand as they started for Skansen that night. Lillemore had a

toothache and was not in holiday humor. She had expected Maria, the house maid, to go with them and to return with Astrid, early in the evening, but Maria's young man had come up from Skane for the holiday and she had begged so hard to have the evening off, that Lillemore had not had the heart to refuse her. What could she do! Astrid wore her new pink and white dress and there were wide pink ribbons on her stiff little braids. She was in fine spirits and though she held Lillemore's hand on one side she held Audrey's on the other.

The boat was so crowded they were glad to be on land again. It was twilight, under the dense foliage of the trees at Skansen, delightful there.

Audrey was a little tired of the brilliant light, and this was a very splendid midsummer night. The sky had been fearful in its beauty as they had come across the bay in the little boat.

What joy it was to run down the wood paths at Skansen, music and laughter sounding everywhere, the open spaces, the caves where the polar bears lived, the caves where the wild cats lived, the funny little yellow-faced Lapps, in their huts! It was all quite different from any park that the Bradford children had ever seen before.

"It's like an enchanted forest. I know Nore could make up a wonderful story about it," thought Audrey. "Where is he, I wonder? Somewhere with that stupid Axel, I suppose."

They all stood by the cave watching the baby wildcats.

"The little Froken may hold one if she likes," said the kindly keeper and with a squeal of delight Astrid held out her arms and caught close to her heart the sleek baby cat with its tawny skin and funnily marked little face.

"Oh, the darling!" They all crowded around Astrid, each one having a turn at holding the little animal, and the boys were quite as delighted as the girls. They stayed quite a while talking to the keeper and listening to the roar of the parent cats who glared at them from their retreat in the cave. Then they all rode behind the reindeer. It was fun, driving along in the sweet night air, with freedom and laughter and the holiday spirit all about them.

"I love it here, I love it here. Oh, Val, I can never give you as happy a time as this when you and Bjorn come to see us in America," said Audrey, putting her arm lovingly around Valfried, as they rode, side by side, in the funny little red and green Lapp cart. She had forgotten her anger of the morning. Valfried was her dear new friend, she knew in her heart of hearts that no one could be more generous or kindly than Valfried. It was only a black cloud that had passed quickly by, the sunshine was there, just the same.

"Of course, you can give us wonderful times in Ameri a, Audrey, I'd love to see the lights you tell

about at Coney Island, all the funny things there. We're just different here, that's all, it's new to you," answered Valfried.

After a while they were ready to sit quietly in one of the open spaces near a quaint log cabin, waiting for the peasants to dance. Suddenly they heard music, and around a corner of the wood came an odd old man. He wore a long, tan, coat-like garment, and he was playing a fiddle. Behind him came the gayly dressed peasant men and women who were to dance. Such dancing!

Audrey heard the stamp of their feet for many nights in her dreams, and the clap of their hands above their heads. The brilliant costumes of the girls, the odd tight trousers of the men, the quaint gay music of the old-time dances, were all a part of the strange, foreign evening.

When the dancing was over they found that poor Lillemore was in tears; her tooth was worse and she was afraid she would have to go home, but she dared not leave them.

"But this is absurd, Lillemore," said Bjorn, who was very much the head of the house since they had come to Stockholm. "We shall be perfectly safe, it won't be long now until they light the bonfire. We're not a set of babies. Don't you suppose I can take better care of the girls than you? Of course you must go home if you are suffering!"

"Come then, my älskling," Lillemore sobbed, hold-

ing out her hand for her youngest charge. Then the trouble began for Astrid refused to go.

"Oh, Bjorn, Bjorn, let me stay, I've never seen a bonfire. Oh Bjorn, you said when I was so sick with the measles you would do anything I wanted when I was well again. You came and whispered to me when no one was looking and you said, 'Get well quick, älskling, and we'll have a fine time together; we'll go on a holiday, just you and I.'" Her sobs increased as she went on, the others standing around her. "You said, 'We'll go to the indoor circus and see the French clown'—Oh this is much, much better than a circus!"

Bjorn looked annoyed and shamefaced. Astrid's sobs could be heard by all the passersby and he hated a scene.

"Oh, lēt her stay," he said roughly. "She's a nuisance, why didn't mother take her to Jevla? She's always been spoiled and she always will be; never mind, go on Lillemore, we'll keep her."

The unwilling but suffering Lillemore took her departure and the children found themselves alone. Astrid was all smiles as soon as she realized that she was really to stay. Audrey took her hand.

"Stay close to me all the time, and I'll see that you have all the fun," she told the little girl.

The crowds were growing and suddenly it seemed as though there were millions of people. The whole park grew black with them, and the noise of many

voices talking at once in loud excited tones showed that they were making ready for the bonfire.

It was laid in a huge open space, the great logs were piled high and the wood and brush still higher. They had been soaked with oil and there would be nothing to do but put a torch to them, at the last moment.

"It's like the old, old days. You know, Audrey and Sven. The old, old men who worshipped the sun-god, Balder, lit a great fire as an emblem that *he* could destroy the powers of darkness," Ingeborg whispered to Audrey, as they stood waiting.

"Hush," whispered Bjorn.

There was silence, such silence! There in the forest not a leaf seemed to move, the birds were still. There was not even the roar of a wild cat in the distance. Tense silence, the great mass of people, thousands of them stood like statues.

Suddenly there was a noise, a strange heavy muffled startling noise and the huge scarlet and gold flames leaped, it seemed, to the very sky itself. Ingeborg, Audrey and Valfried stood close together and Astrid hid her face in Audrey's dress. Audrey looked down at her.

"Don't be afraid, baby dear, it's beautiful, it won't hurt you!" she whispered.

"I'm not afraid," said Astrid, stoutly, lifting her face. She would not for the world act differently from the older ones.

The flames leaped up, soared, and then there came the sound of men's voices singing in a mighty chorus:

"Hör oss, Sven, moder av oss alla, hör oss, hör oss."

When the voices ceased there was silence and then a great cheer rose and swelled.

It was then, when Audrey was shouting with the rest, that Astrid saw the pancake man. She had liked the bonfire, but she was tired and she was hungry. Audrey had lifted her arms to wave them as the others did, and Astrid ran down the path after the pancake man. She would buy them all pancakes with the öre Bjorn had given her, early in the evening; then she would run right back and surprise them.

But the pancake man, in spite of his cart, walked quickly. In a few moments the crowd would be making for the boats, and he wanted to be there with his wares. There was still a chance of doing some good business.

Astrid almost caught up with him, once or twice, but he hopped along so briskly that, hurry as fast as she could, he seemed always just beyond her reach. It was no use, she would have to do without the pancakes. She turned to go back, was caught up in the whirling, rushing onslaught of the crowd, now coming in masses towards the boats, and in spite of herself was carried along with it, away from the world she knew, the world of constant loving attention.

A moment after Astrid disappeared, Audrey discovered she was gone. She turned to the others, thinking the child had pushed in between them; then, not seeing her, she exclaimed in a quick, startled way, "Where's Astrid?"

Where was she indeed! There were quick questions, a darting here and there, then Audrey said decidedly, "We simply must stay together for a moment, or we'll lose each other; if we stay where she left us, she may come running back in a second." Audrey's voice was drowned by the sound of many voices, the crowd had started and the children could only rush back behind some trees and wait until the great seething mass had passed. As soon as the crowd had thinned they came out and stood, a frightened little group, at the side of a wood path. Valfried was sobbing hysterically. Bjorn's freckles stood out oddly on his sober, boyish face; he was very pale and it gave him a strange sort of look. He did not seem like Bjorn at all.

"There is only one thing we can do, remember this one spot, here by the path leading to the wild cat cave, and come back to it after we have hunted for an hour," Audrey said, putting her arm around Valfried. "It's my fault, I forgot her for a minute, I promised your mother to take care of her." Audrey's voice shook a little as she spoke, but she did not cry.

"Nonsense, it was our fault, Val's and mine. We

didn't want her to come along to Stockholm, we haven't tried to look after her or to give her a good time," said Bjorn. Valfried sobbed louder than ever, at this, and Audrey cried out impatiently: "Do stop crying, Val, we'll never find Astrid if you don't. Why don't you go to the police station, Bjorn, right away? In the meantime we'll be looking everywhere here in the park and we can meet at the wild cat cage in an hour's time." Bjorn was off almost before she finished speaking, and the others started in different directions, down the wood paths, promising to meet again, in an hour.

"We can keep track of the time by the tower clock," said Sven. He was of course sorry that Astrid was lost but confident that she would be found, and in the meantime, hunting for her was quite exciting. Sven would not have admitted for the world that he enjoyed the situation, but such was almost the case!

It was not so with Audrey. She felt that she had failed in her promise to Fru Zander and there was a lump in her throat as she ran down the paths.

"Astrid, Astrid, it's Audrey, where are you, baby?" she called again and again.

The trees and shrubs stood out oddly in the deepening light. How very dear, funny little Astrid had suddenly become. Had they ever really thought her in the way? Valfried caught her breath in sobs as she too went through the wood. Now and then she paused to ask a passerby if he or she had seen a little

girl in a pink and white checked dress, carrying a doll, a little girl with flaxen pigtails, but no one had noticed her.

"Astrid, it's Audrey, where are you, baby?" A sob rose to Audrey's lips but she choked it back. Stockholm was a big city, and the midsummer crowds! People from all the countryside, from Copenhagen and Christiana, from the south of Sweden, and different parts of Europe. Never in New York, Audrey thought, had she seen such black masses of people. Astrid was such a very little girl, so small and plump, with such a baby face, so sheltered and petted. Still, she had a wise little head on her shoulders, perhaps she was already home!

This thought so comforted Audrey that she ran back to their meeting place. The other girls were already there and Nils and Sven were coming up the path. Valfried was a little comforted by Audrey's suggestion that Astrid had reached home, though they all knew in their hearts that this was very doubtful. They were so tired that they sat down under a tree to wait for Bjorn, there by the wild cat cage.

CHAPTER 10

Eugene

When Astrid saw the boats waiting she was glad to be borne along by the crowd. The boat would take her home! She was out alone, in the middle of the night; she had always wanted to be doing just this thing. If only the crowds were not so big! People jostled her; sometimes she did not walk at all, she seemed to be carried along. The boat too was very uncomfortable, and some men were quarreling with loud voices. She crept away to a coil of ropes and sat there, the Tomte doll held firmly against her side. She was very cold, her new dress was soiled and she had lost her blue jacket. She had laid it down somewhere and had forgotten it.

Very soon they reached the landing and Astrid found herself on shore. As she stood there, on the wind swept wharf, she looked about her in bewilderment. Then she suddenly realized what she had done, she had followed the crowd to a boat that sailed over to the very old part of the city. She had heard of it, she knew that it was very old and strange and that many of the poorer people lived there but

she had never been there. Oh, she had felt so sure that the boat would take her near home! A sense of great desolation touched her, she grew suddenly confused. Twice she started to speak to some one passing her but no one noticed her. Other children were being hustled into waiting cars for home and bed.

Astrid followed the crowd up the very steep stone steps, and, weary of the jostle and noise, she turned down a quiet street off the big one where everything seemed whirling and turning and shouting. If the crowds had not been so great, some woman very probably would have noticed her, but huddled as she was, among them all, no one had realized that she was alone.

It was a very narrow quiet street into which she had turned. The houses were dark and still on each side of it. She had never seen a street like it before and she started to turn back. Just then there was loud rough laughter from the direction she had come. Perhaps the quarreling men on the boat were following her! Perhaps they would kidnap her! Bjorn had read her a story of some men who had stolen a boy and taken him on a pirate boat out to sea!

In a sudden wild fear, borne of her fatigue and loneliness, she started to run. She ran on and on. It seemed as though she could never stop, but at last her sturdy little legs could go no farther. She had run on, unseeing, in and out of odd crooked streets,

farther and rarther away from all things familiar. She sank down, at last, on a cold stone doorstep. For some time she breathed deeply and then she began to cry. She held the Tomte doll close in her arms and her tears fell on his kindly painted face and beard.

"There's just you and me, Tomte, there's just you and me, we're losted from our dear family. Oh, I want my family." She sobbed quite out loud as she spoke to the Tomte. "When we get home again we'll always hold on to somebody's hand," she sobbed.

It was like twilight where she was, for the houses were so close together and so very dark and the street was so narrow that it was like a little winding lane between mountains to the tired child.

Suddenly she heard steps, the tap of a cane, and someone singing softly quite a charming air: "L'amour est l'enfant de bohème."

Astrid looked up. Someone was coming down the street towards her. He stopped in front of her and stood looking down at her, still humming the song. He spoke to her quickly in a language she did not understand, then said a few halting sentences in Swedish. Astrid was not frightened, for she looked up and saw his face which was quite gentle in spite of being so dark and strange. Suddenly a feeling of comfort came to her. "I can speak English," she said.

"Splendid!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then we shall make friends at once. I too know the language, a hard one, hard and sure, yet oddly full of beauty, still." He smiled down at Astrid and she smiled up at him with her tear-drenched blue eyes. She had not understood just what he meant, but she was glad he spoke English and she saw that he was friendly.

"Isn't it a little late for you to be abroad?" He looked down at her thin frock and at the doll in her arms. "It is, I believe, generally the custom for such a very young lady to be asleep at this hour."

"I'm lost," explained Astrid. "Tomte and I are lost." She tried to smile up at him again but this time her chin quivered and two very big tears splashed down upon the ever faithful Tomte.

"Many lost things are found, you know, some are not—hearts, for instance, once lost are usually gone for all time—but come—you are cold!"

"And hungry," said Astrid.

The man laughed softly. "We can remedy that at least, come inside with me." She jumped up eagerly and took the hand he held out to her. He unlocked the outer door and they stepped into the silent, dark hall. It was a very old building. A sleepy portvack put his head outside the little window at the top of the door at the left, saw Astrid and the stranger, and shut the little door together again with a bang. He had been out on a holiday himself and he was just going to bed.

They started to walk up the stairs, but almost at once the man said to Astrid, "You are tired, I will carry you." He lifted her in his arms and climbed with her up the very steep winding stairs. He still sang softly but Astrid did not hear his song, for she was fast asleep as soon as her head touched his shoulder.

The stranger unlocked the door of his room, still holding the child in the curve of his arm. He went through a narrow hall into a long high ceilinged room which was quite bare except for a couch in one corner, a chair or two, a table and an easel in another corner. There was a rug on the floor, a very soft, beautiful rug, and on the wall were many unframed pictures. Several half-finished ones stood against the wall, and they were covered with cloths to keep them from the dust.

The man laid Astrid down on the couch and going over to a cupboard in the hall just off the room, he brought back a covering and tucked it gently about the little sleeping girl. It was a soft rug of woven rose and blue silk and it glowed in the dim light of the odd old room, like a brilliant flower. Then he began to build a fire in the tall, white stove that gleamed in the corner near the door. He let a heavy piece of wood fall on the floor and the noise woke Astrid. She sat up a little dazed.

"How clumsy of me to waken the sleeping princess," said her benefactor coming quickly over to the

couch. "But now that you are awake, do you think you could stay so for a bit, just long enough for us to break bread together?"

Astrid yawned and smiled. "Is this your house?" she asked.

"Yes, my studio, where I paint pictures."

He went over to another cupboard behind the door and brought out a dull green cloth and some white plates, knives and forks. Then he turned and looked at Astrid. "I'm afraid there is only a box of sardines and some cheese. I've been busy working out something the last few days and I let Domski, my servant, go out for the whole day. There is no milk and no way of fetching any for some hours." He looked worried and was relieved when Astrid ran over to him eagerly. "I hate milk, I love cheese and sardines." She said this daringly, with Lillemore's scandalized face coming before her in her imagination. "Let's have a nice time, lovely cheese and sardines. I can set the table." She hummed a little tune, quite waked up at the thought of something to eat, and started to put the plates straight and the knives and forks beside them.

"But you are splendid, you are a real housewife," exclaimed her new friend.

They made a merry meal. Her new friend brewed some coffee in a copper arrangement which he told Astrid was a samovar. They both watched it with interest and Astrid grew more and more wide awake

and talkative. Before the coffee was ready, her rescuer knew that she had a big brother, a sister, very good parents and a nurse named Lillemore who was very fat. He knew about Sunhem and the garden, was told that she had ten whole dolls and two that would be all right as soon as they were mended.

"Now you tell something," she demanded, as she paused for breath. Now that she was no longer alone and hungry, her spirits rose. She liked talking to the stranger who listened so politely to all she said. She had never been allowed to talk so much before, no one had ever listened just as though she were a grown up person. She had always been just little Astrid, the baby, but her new friend talked to her as though she were a grown up lady. He poured her out a small cup of coffee that was delightful. It tasted bitter but she sipped a little and pretended that she liked it.

The man smiled when she asked him to tell about himself. He had a nice smile but even the child could see that it was a sad one.

"You've told me that your name is Astrid. Well, mine is Eugene. I'm an artist, I make pictures, some that I see and some that I dream." He smiled again delightfully at Astrid. Her hair had become unbraided and stood out in flaxen wings, each side of her head. There was a black spot on her chin of which she was quite unconscious. Her friend leaned

forward suddenly and gently brushed it off with his handkerchief, which smelled of Russian leather.

"Pardon," said Eugene, "you make a picture, you see; a picture of youth and mischief, of sun and flowers—only the black spot, it does not belong."

The excitement and fatigue made her round cheeks very rosy. She liked being told she was a picture, no one had ever told her that before.

Suddenly she jumped up, ran over to the couch, and came back with the Tomte doll in her arms.

"I forgot poor Tomte, he was simply tired out, he's never been out all night before, you know." She sat him on her knee and held up a bit of bread and sardine to his smiling face.

"And you?" asked Eugene, "are you perhaps in the habit of spending your nights in running down strange streets and sitting on cold doorsteps?" He sipped his coffee and looked at the child quizzically. She knew that he was joking though he did not smile.

"I've never done anything alone, I'm the youngest and they're always watching me."

"Tell me now where I am to telephone, so that I can let your nurse know that you are safe. They will all be frightened, we must tell them that you have found a friend," said Eugene.

"Strandvagen is where our home is, I can't think of the number. Let's wait till it's tomorrow." Eugene smiled. "It is that already, but I will wait for an hour. It will teach them to be more careful

of you next time." He went over to the phone and looked in the book. "Bjorn Zander is your father's name; yes, here it is. After all, it is not kind to keep them in suspense." He called the number and waited. There was no reply! Were they all out hunting?

"I will try again later. You will be glad to see your home."

"Sunhem is my real home. Audrey and Sven love it. Audrey says the brownies made the garden, we just pretend that. There isn't any garden where her grandfather lives in the castle on the rocks."

Eugene came towards her. "What castle?" he asked. He drew a cigarette case from his pocket and taking one out, looked at Astrid. "May I smoke?" he queried. Astrid smiled delightedly. Then he asked again. "What castle, little friend?"

Astrid looked up at him with sleepy blue eyes. "Why, the castle on the rocks where Audrey and Sven's grandfather lives. They came all the way from America to see him. But he's a cross grandfather, not a nice one, like our's." She put her head down on her arm. Then she turned and looked at him, her little flaxen head still resting on her arms. "I'm glad you found me. You are a nice man. You are like the fairy prince that rescued the goose girl, in a story Valfried read, only he had golden curls." She was so nearly asleep that her voice trailed on the last words.

"You are so tired then, ah, poor baby!" Again

Eugene lifted her and put her on the couch, covering her with the rug. He stood for a moment, looking down at her.

"What an odd baby, what a good little comrade," he thought. Then he went over to the window and stood looking down at the still grey houses, at the narrow, cobbled, crooked street, gilded now with green and gold, for it was early morning, and the sun had only faded for a brief twilight time, that midsummer night.

"The castle on the rocks," he said half aloud. "Strange if it should be so—children coming from America to see a grandfather who lives in a castle on the rocks, eh bien—the loom will weave itself."

He stood for a long time there at the window, his cigarette unnoticed in his hand, and the sadness in his eyes was deep and the firmness of his lips showed grimly.

CHAPTER 11

By the Palace Steps

"I'M TOO sleepy to stay here another second. Let s catch the next boat." Axel yawned as he spoke, pulling Nore's arm. "Come on, come on, Nore. Every one is leaving."

"I'm not sleepy, but come on if you like. Only mind you, I'll leave you on the other side of the bay. I don't want to go to bed. I want to—oh—look around."

The two friends were walking towards the boats as they talked, and they finally stood waiting with the crowd as their boat chugged at the landing.

"We'd better buy something to eat on the boat, I'm starved," suggested Axel.

"So am I," answered Nore, putting some coins into the eager hand of a funny old apple woman, who stood at one side of the crowd. She was a very old woman indeed, and she sang a queer sort of song as she stood there, selling her apples and pepparkakor. Axel bought a bag filled with the latter delicacy.

Some loiterers about the entrance gate stared at

the old woman curiously, and asked her if she told fortunes. She laughed shrilly. "When the money is good, why not?" she cried. She laughed again loudly and waved towards Nore as the crowd began to move slowly towards the boat.

"The gold-haired lad, he does not care to have his fortune told. He has secrets behind him, secrets and shadows," she shrilled. Her voice was drowned by the loud whistling of the boat horn.

When they landed Axel said he was going at once to the Konditori and to bed.

"You go on, then, Axel, I'll look about for awhile," said Nore. And so Axel went off towards their shelter at Fru Strom's and Nore climbed the steep steps back of the palace where they had landed and walked slowly across the bridge.

A big clock somewhere struck three. Under the great bridge the Baltic Sea and the Malar Lake met with an angry foaming rush. The harbor was swept with shadows and with bright flashes of red and gold. The sun shone boldly, silvering the church spires of the city and the masts of the many ships that lay about in the harbor. Old Ridderholm Church, where so many long ago kings were buried, seemed a massive etching of black and silver against the rose and violet of the sky.

Nore stayed for some time on the bridge for, as it grew later, there was much to see. Boats began to come in. One, a big tourist steamer from Russia,

steamed in slowly and anchored so near that he could hear the shouting back and forth and even smell the coffee for breakfast. This made him realize that he was very hungry, and he remembered what good coffee and what spicy sugar and annis seed coffee-bread Fru Strom could make. It was still too early for breakfast of course, but he would sleep for awhile.

"I don't want to waste time sleeping," he thought, "I want to see things all the time, and I'm going to the museum for the afternoon." His love of pictures was greater than anything he knew, except his love for his mother. The first day that he had come it had been possible for him to do a service for an American tourist, a lady who had lost her tickets and had great difficulty in making herself understood. He had spent some time in helping her, had interpreted for her, and sent some wires for her. To him it had been simply a little adventure to think about afterwards, and to tell Thure and Marta and Karl about, but the lady had been very grateful and had given him five kronar. He had refused it at first, had been a little angry that she had offered it. He could not have quite told why. Then, he had thought of the presents he could buy for his mother and the children, and he had taken what the lady offered.

As he walked across the bridge he thought of old Birger Jarl, the long ago king, who had founded

Stockholm. Nore had read of him in his history, but he liked best to weave his own dreams about him whose vision had seen what a wonderful city could be made upon the seven islands, a city for the meeting of the quiet Malar Lake and the wild Baltic. Long ago was the dream of the old king, but now it stood, a proud city upon the islands, and it held in its heart treasures untold, spoils of the Viking wars. "Who knows," thought Nore, "even treasure of the Gods, of Odin and Thor."

As he left the bridge and turned to go down the steps at one side of the palace, he heard shrill voices and saw a group of boys standing in a shadow of the old building. They were calling out, mockingly, and were dancing around someone who stood in their midst. As he came nearer, Nore saw that it was a very odd-looking, dark-faced boy. He was hump-backed, and he had a long pale face, and black eyes that snapped angrily. He spoke very quickly in a foreign tongue, and the faster he spoke, the louder was the laughter.

"Let's see what you're carrying. You're stealing good Swedish food, I'll wager that," jeered one of the boys.

"Don't gabble your Russian at us!" another called angrily.

The boy knew a little Swedish, but in his excitement and anger he thought only of his mother tongue. As Nore came up to the group, the Russian

lad managed to find some Swedish words and he almost shrieked them out:

"I will tell my master. He is famous. He is strong. He is better in his one hand than you are all together. He will not let you insult me!"

"Cry baby! Think of a Swedish boy crying!" one of them jeered.

"And think of a Swedish boy being a bully! What a good thought for the army! How proud it will be of you all some day!" Nore had come up without their noticing him. They turned on him quickly as he spoke, and he smiled at them a little insolently as he stood there in the dancing sunlight. Then he stepped into the shadow and spoke to the boy. "It's all right. Don't mind them," he said. Then he turned again and looked at the tallest boy who stood nearest him. "You're a decent lot, aren't you!" he said.

One of the boys looked ashamed. "Of course we didn't touch him. We would not hurt him, because he's lame. He began by telling us we had no manners when we didn't pick up his bundles for him when they fell." One of the others laughed at this, and even Nore smiled. Before he spoke again, they had turned away. The tall boy called back over his shoulder,

"We were only teasing, but you Russians hate being teased."

The Russian lad stood holding his bundles close against him, looking up gratefully at Nore.

"They're not really bad boys. He was right. They wouldn't have hurt me because I'm lame, but they do not like me." He and Nore both stood there and laughed in the sunshine, they couldn't have told why. It was a jolly morning, the beginning of another fine day and they were both young.

"They were just stupid. They didn't think. But come, give me some of your bundles. I'll go along your way," said Nore, and the two boys went down the steps together and along the square back of the palace. It was more open there than in the streets beyond, and the sun found its bright way all along the old street. People were walking about, doing early marketing and a few anxious shopkeepers were opening their shops, wishing to be sure that no idlers had broken in during the holiday night to steal or to do any mischief.

"I want to go back home. I hate this place," said the lame boy, passionately, as they walked along together, turning suddenly down a long dark passage which was a short cut to the very oldest part of all. The boy led the way. He seemed familiar with all the unexpected turnings, and he walked quickly for one so bent and lame.

"Come," said Nore, "you're tired and lonely, that's all. Stockholm is wonderful. I could not believe that any city could be more wonderful. I wish I could show you how jolly it really is. I've wanted to come and see it, ever since I could remember."

The boy looked up at Nore. "Yes," he answered, "I'm lonely. My master has been full of work the last week. He told me to go yesterday and enjoy it all, but what could I do—a poor lad, all alone in a strange place. My name's Domski—what is your's?"

Nore told him, and as their walk was a long one, they grew quite friendly before they reached the end. Domski told Nore that his master was the best in the world, that he painted pictures and that he thought a great deal, and that sometimes he was very silent.

"He is good to me always, but some times he forgets me. I have food for him now, a fowl and some vegetables. I waited until the shops were open before starting home."

Nore listened eagerly when Domski told of his master being an artist.

"Do you watch your master when he paints?" he asked the lad, who shook his head.

"No, but I clean his palette and easel, and keep his room in order, and see that he has food. Often I go to shops to buy materials for his pictures. Last week I went with him to the customs when he sent two to Paris. Oh, my master is known in the great world," said Domski, with pride in his voice.

"Have you been here long?" asked Nore.

"No, and I don't know if we shall be going back soon or not.—Do you know," he went on, speaking

in a low voice and looking about him, as though fearful that some passerby should hear, "sometimes I think that my master is here for some other reason than just making pictures." Domski nodded his head back and forth in a knowing sort of way, but said nothing more. Nore looked at him with interest as they made their way along the rough cobbled street. He had seemed so weak and stupid there, when the boys had teased him, but when he spoke of his master, he was quite different.

"It's because it's the thing that interests him," thought Nore, as they stopped in front of a low doorway.

"I'll go now," he said to Domski. "I liked hearing about your master. I'd rather paint pictures than do anything in the world."

"But come in, come in. He does not often see strangers, but he will be happy to meet you because of your kindness to me," exclaimed the Russian lad, putting his hand on Nore's shoulder in a friendly way.

"It is too early, I fear he would not wish it. I'd best be going back."

"No, no, you are to come with me. I wish him to thank you for rescuing the fowl and the carrots from the bad boys," answered Domski firmly. They both laughed and Nore rather unwillingly followed the other up the steep, winding stairs. It was surprising how fast Domski could climb, in spite

of his lameness. When they reached the top, he found the door unlocked.

"My master has to be here at the very top so as to have light for his pictures," he explained as he opened the door, and they went into the narrow hall. Domski opened a door at the end and stepped inside, holding the door back for Nore, who stood uncertainly on the threshold.

CHAPTER 12

Déjeuner

THE room was bright with sunshine and there were pictures everywhere. A child was asleep on a couch in one corner, and facing him, with his back to the window, stood the tall, dark man who had spoken to him at Hasslebacken. For a moment they stood in silence, looking at each other.

"This lad saved your dinner from some boys who mocked me," sir," explained Domski, putting his bundles on the table. "He wanted to see your pictures and so I made him come up with me."

Still the man did not speak. He stood looking at Nore.

"Who are you?" he asked, as he had asked that night at Hasslebacken. There was the same odd, puzzled sound in his voice, and as before, Nore answered:

"I'm Nore Carlson, sir."

"Yes, yes, of course, come in, lad. I seem honored with visits from strange children, today," and he nodded towards the couch. "There is one who chanced upon me at quite an early hour, just when

the sun had hidden for a bit of time. She is just waking up."

The sound of voices had reached Astrid in her dreams, and she woke suddenly, sitting bolt upright at once and rubbing her eyes. Then she saw Nore.

"It's Nore, it's Nore from home," she cried joyously, jumping up, and, running over to him. She flung herself upon him in her delight in seeing some one familiar to the little world she knew.

"It's Nore Carlson, who taught my brother to sail a boat," she cried, turning and looking at Eugene over her shoulder, her hair flying in wild disorder about her excited little face. Nore gazed at her in amazement, and then at the man by the window.

"It's little Astrid Zander from up the fjords where I live," he exclaimed. Eugene nodded, coming up to them. "I found her on my doorstep, at dawn. I've notified her people, phoned twice before I could get them. It seems the children she was with came back from the park in a great state of despair, and the nurse quite lost her head; the maids were out and as they all went off searching again I phoned twice before I could get them. A young girl with an American voice answered the last time. She said she thought it best to come back to the house and wait as there might be a phone call. I should say she had rather more of a head than the rest of them. They are sending for the child right away."

"They will indeed be grateful, sir," Nore said

to Eugene and then looked down at Astrid. "You little runaway, what would Fru Zander say!" he exclaimed.

"Mama lilla, she went to Tanta Lisa, she told the others to take great care of me. They should have looked after me better. I was only going to buy some pancakes for myself and Audrey. They were all shouting after the singing, and that's when I tried to catch up with the pancake man. Oh, nice Nore, I'm glad you've come — Tomte, see who's here!" She ran over to the couch and came back with the doll in her arms, smiling up at Nore.

Eugene looked at her in mock reproach, smiling his slow, whimsical smile.

"You should not desert the new friend for the old," he said to her. She understood and turning she caught his hand.

"He's my friend," she explained proudly to Nore. "Wouldn't Audrey and Valfried like to have a real grown up friend who paints pictures!"

They all laughed at this, even Domski, who had left the room a moment before, and who had come shuffling back, carrying a tray filled with plates, cups and saucers.

Eugene lifted Astrid up on a corner of the table.

"The fairy princess had a very early déjeuner with me. I think, too, that your friend who rescued the fowl is hungry. Domski, suppose we have a meal of some sort while we wait for the ogre nurse to

arrive. She is sure to be here soon. The young girl was to tell her as soon as she came in."

Domski gazed at Astrid in astonishment. A little girl in his master's room! That was indeed a surprise.—A little lost girl!

"You will have something almost at once, sir—the fowl—no, that must cook for a long time, but an omelette, and coffee and milk for the little lady. Oh, that will be with you before you can think!" Domski bustled about like a busy house wife, dusting off the plates with a clean cloth, lighting a flame under a chafing dish and beginning preparations for a hurried meal.

"Just lay this white cloth," he said to Nore, as he removed the green one with the remains of the sardines and cheese. Nore did as he was bid and Eugene watched them both, still with the whimsical smile about his lips. There was a strange look in his eyes, a look of excitement he could hardly have explained, even to himself. The lad, the fair-haired boy, the castle on the rocks,—but no, it was all fantastic!

"If you would be so good as to remove yourself to the other side of the room, sir, I fear I must be very busy just here for a time." Domski spoke respectfully but firmly, and Eugene laughed.

"Quite so," he answered. "Your new friend and I will look at the pictures, he seems already to enjoy them. That is well."

Nore was standing in front of one of the unframed etchings, hung at the left of the door. Eugene, still holding Astrid's hand, came and stood by him.

"You care for pictures?" he asked Nore.

Domski looked back over his shoulder as he was setting the table.

"He told me he liked pictures the best of anything; that is why I made him come up here with me," he said.

Nore turned a glowing face to Eugene. "Oh, sir," was all he managed to say.

"You would make them yourself if you could?" queried Eugene, watching him as he spoke.

Nore laughed. It was a joyous laugh, a child's laugh. The look of care seemed to have fallen away from him.

"I would make them sir, yes, if a dream came true."

"Dreams do come true, don't they, little comrade?" asked Eugene, turning to Astrid who still held his hand.

"They do in fairy books. I dreamed I had a baby wild cat all my own. I hope that dream will come true. I want to go and see that funny boy," Astrid dropped Eugene's hand and ran over to the table. She began to follow Domski about as he set the table. She watched him as though fascinated, he was so lame and yet he jumped about so quickly. He was

so dark and eager and he spoke such a funny language in such an excited way.

"Could you say, lad, which picture it is that you most care for?" asked Eugene of Nore, as they walked slowly about the room.

"The ship, I think, the tall ship in the twilight sea." Then he walked back a little way and stood before a small water color.

"This too," he said, looking at Eugene, throwing back his head to toss the bright locks back from his forehead in a way he had of doing. Eugene gave an exclamation under his breath. Then he came forward and stood beside Nore.

The picture was that of an old garden. One felt at a glance that it was old and that it was quite a little garden. There was an old sun dial in the centre, and the flowers that grew along the little winding, grey garden path were gay, startling in color, tulips and poppies and peonies. Sunshine seemed to be everywhere. On a grey bench there was a scarlet shawl, so cleverly done that one could almost feel its soft, silk folds. One felt, too, that its wearer had but flung it carelessly down, a moment before, and would be running back for it in a little while.

Eugene's face worked curiously for a moment.

"That was my garden. I lived there once," he said.

"The meal, it is ready, master," called Domski.

At the same moment there was a bang on the door.

and before they could speak, it was burst open and Lillemore bounced in. She was purple and breathless, and her breath came in short sobs. Astrid ran towards her, and she caught her to her broad breast. Two boys, who proved to be Bjorn and Sven, were just behind her and they gazed in utter atonishment at Nore, at the odd Russian boy and at Eugene, himself.

"I'm Astrid's brother. Thank you for us all, sir, for looking after her," said Bjorn, as soon as he could find his voice.

In a few moments it seemed as though they had all known each other always. Lillemore was profuse in her thanks but so excited was she, that she spoke mostly in the patois of her native Skona, and Eugene could not understand her. With the children, he spoke English.

They made a merry meal all together, for Eugene asked them all to stay. They were waited on by Lillemore and Domski, one so pale and small, the other so big and red. The boys were very hungry, and Lillemore occasionally whispered a reproving word to Bjorn. "You should not eat as though you had nothing at home. What will the gentleman think of you?" she hissed.

"Can't help it, Lillemore. Hunting for lost sisters is hungry work."

Eugene watched them with a smile. His work was being sadly interrupted but there was something

here more important. The excited, puzzled look was there in his eyes, as it had been at Hasslebacken. He listened carefully to all that the children said.

It was towards the middle of the meal that Sven turned his honest, blunt, American face towards Eugene.

"My sister certainly would like to thank you for finding Astrid, sir. She says it was her fault, for she promised Fru Zander to look after the child. She was having such a good time she forgot her for a second. My! but it's fun here. We come from America. I guess you know that by my voice. We're visiting my grandfather."

Astrid's words came back to Eugene. "They've come to stay with a cross grandfather, in a castle on the rocks." He leaned forward.

"What is your grandfather's name, please?" he asked.

"Essen, he is the Count Essen," answered Sven, spreading some goat's cheese on a piece of coffee bread.

There was a moment's silence in the room. It was Bjorn who broke it, rising and speaking a little clumsily. "Well, it's not very polite to have a meal and go right along, but we've only two more days to run around in." He held out his hand.

"If we can do anything for you, sir, we would be glad to. My father will write you a letter and I

thank you again. Come, boys, let's go. Come, Astrid and Lillemore."

Eugene bade them good-bye at the outer door. Astrid put her plump arms around his neck and kissed him.

"You come and see us at Sunhem, only do bring Domski too, he's so funny. Thank you for finding me. You will come and see me, won't you? Kiss Tomte good-bye." She held the doll up to Eugene, and then she pretended to have the Tomte speak, in a high squeaking voice.

"Thank you for rescuing us, fairy prince," she had him say.

They all laughed at this, standing in the doorway.

"Thank you, I shall come soon," answered Eugene. He glanced at Bjorn as he spoke.

"Do come, sir," Bjorn said heartily.

Eugene looked at Nore.

"You live across the bay from the castle on the rocks? You are near the others?"

Nore nodded, smiling his rare smile.

"Yes, and we should be glad to see you in our cottage, my mother and I. The pictures, thank you for letting me see the pictures, sir."

"I will see you all again." Eugene waved his hand at them as they started down the street. There was a droski stand, not far away, and they had wanted first a little walk.

When Eugene came back to his room, Domski greeted him with shining eyes.

"They are good, those boys. They spoke in a good way to me. They said, 'If you come down the skerries, you can sail with us.' Oh, we shall be lonely, master. It is good to have guests—but such appetites. It was a fairy omelette, that it lasted as it did!"

"But the ogre nurse ate nothing. You should be thankful for that, Domski," said Eugene.

"One moment, sir, I will clear away and then you will have room for your work—I will fetch the easel."

"No, Domski, I am going to think for awhile. There are things to puzzle about, there are things to dream about, even are there things to hope for—vague perhaps—who knows? Soon I shall write a letter to a village called Boo, I shall inquire for lodgings and I daresay a week from today we shall be there. You may have your sailing party after all," answered Eugene.

"Very good, sir," answered Domski.

CHAPTER 13

On the Balcony

"THE real fun was over the day after midsummer. I'm glad we're on our way back for I want to, oh, sail and see about all sorts of things. I want Hjalmar to help me about this sail-boat business. I want the boat right off, father said to ask Hjalmar about it."

"How can you say the real fun was over midsummer day, when we had such a good time at the indoor circus, and I bought a Swedish costume and all, the next day. And Sven, oh, can't you see—it's all so funny, the dark stranger finding Astrid, and then Nore's meeting the servant boy, Domski. Life is so thrilling, I wonder what will happen next." Audrey gave a sigh of sheer joy as she spoke.

"Supper, I hope. Look, there's the castle. Here we are. Hullo, Hjalmar! There's Hjalmar, see! Funny old bird, isn't he?" Sven waved, and so did Audrey and the others. Audrey and Ingeborg hugged each other, and Audrey put something into Ingeborg's hand. It was a little white crepe handkerchief. "I bought it at the Nordiska Kompaniet. Keep

it, just for fun, to remember our new friendship. And oh, Ingeborg, don't tell, but I'm going to try to get grandfather to let us give a party at the castle."

"Your grandfather," gasped Ingeborg. She had not time to say any more for the boat had stopped at the landing and the boys were calling to Audrey to hurry.

They waved to the boat in true Swedish fashion until it was out of sight. Then Audrey turned impulsively and put her arms around Valfried, giving her a hug.

"It's been just the happiest time. Oh Val, I've adored every minute," she said. "I've made a new friend in Ingeborg and we three are always going to be friends together, all our lives."

"Yes we are," answered Valfried. "I'm going to be nicer, too. Oh, Audrey—the night that Astrid was lost, I've never told any one, but I did pray. I told God I'd never be bored again by having Astrid around all the time." They were climbing the rocks and they both stood still for a moment and laughed at Valfried's funny prayer.

"You will be bored by her dozens of times, when we want to do things without her, but any way we realize how precious she is now," answered Audrey. "There's Tante Greta. Good-bye, I'll see you this evening." Audrey ran up the rest of the rocks towards the castle and Valfried turned off towards Sunhem. Astrid, Lillemore and the maids had gone

on ahead and the boys had immediately gone off for a sail-boat talk with Hjalmar.

Tante Greta was certainly glad to see them, and so was their grandfather. "He won't say so, nothing could make him, but he is glad, I can feel that he is," Audrey said to Sven that evening. "I'm going to wait a day or two, and then I'm going to ask him about the party."

It was almost a week before she did ask him, but one glorious evening, after she, Valfried, and the boys had come in from a sail, she found her grandfather alone in the library, and went up to him. The old man was half asleep, and he started as she spoke to him.

"Grandfather!"

"Who spoke, who's that?" he asked, starting up.

"You know, grandfather. It's Audrey. See me. See what a fine granddaughter you have." She came around in front of him and smiled down at him.

"Come out on the balcony, please, grandfather, I want to ask you a favor." She put her hand, coaxingly, on the old man's arm and helped him to stand up. Then, very carefully, she guided his steps across the long, old library, gilded to dancing color in the sunset, across to the wide open French window, to the wide stone balcony that overhung the rocks from which one could look down at the bay below.

Audrey brought a wool rug and put it over her grandfather's knees, tucking it securely about him.

"You do love to be fussed over, don't you, grandfather?" She brought a little stool and sat down upon it beside the old man.

"Grandfather," she said at once, "don't you think we ought to have some fun?"

"Fun?" queried the old man, drawing the rug more closely about him. "Fun, who thinks of fun? It's a long day since I've heard the word, a long day!" He sighed heavily. Audrey patted his knee.

"Oh, come, grandfather, it's almost my favorite word, so like it for my sake. Isn't it fine that we are such good friends, you and I? It would have been a pity if we hadn't been congenial. You think I'm the best reader aloud that ever was, and I've made you laugh five times."

Her grandfather smiled. "You have spirit. You are like your American father, I daresay, and yet sometimes I think I hear Sigried's voice when I hear you speak." He sighed as he spoke, and for a brief instant his hand touched her dark hair.

"I love you when you talk that way, grandfather, when you say you think you hear Sigried's voice when I speak. It's just like a story. It makes me have a sort of thrill and I've had so many of them lately. Yes, I'm fond of you, grandfather, even though you are so odd and bad tempered. Now, don't be huffy, you know you are."

"I am, am I?"

"Yes, just when I begin to like you, you snap up

poor Tante Greta, who only lives to please you. Then I say to myself: 'What a pity, grandfather thinks always of himself. What a dear old man he would be if he'd think of something besides his troubles.'" Audrey paused, she was rather frightened at what she had said. She of all people to be preaching to her grandfather.

"Well, you are forward enough," exclaimed the old man, but to Audrey's surprise he did not seem very much put out.

"You see, grandfather, the Zanders have such a very lovely grandfather and are always holding him up as being so much nicer than you. Of course they don't really say so, but that's what they think!"

"And you agree with them, I suppose?" asked the old man, dryly.

"Not when you're nice. I think you can be so jolly. Sven would too, if he knew you better. I want to have a happy house like Sunhem. Come, let's plan to have the jolliest kind of time for the rest of the summer."

Her grandfather gave a low chuckle.

"You've come to the wrong place. This is not a jolly house. It can never be. It has known only sorrow and disappointment; only shadows have entered its door."

Audrey stood up, went over and sat on the balcony railing facing the old man.

"You know I'm not a sorrow and disappointment,

grandfather, and I've entered its doors. I don't think it's really so bad here. It's old and dingy but—"

"It has stood for much that is splendid in its day," broke in the old man, a little haughtily.

"Yes, but now it stands for just being dull—yes, DULL, dull—now I want to do something. I want, Oh, how very much you cannot know, I want to give a party!"

The old man looked up at the vivid, smiling, beseeching face of his granddaughter.

"A party here," he repeated. "My child, there has been no such thing here since the old days, when —the," he hesitated. "No, no," he said, "I could not stand the sound of voices and laughter."

"You are not very hospitable, grandfather," said Audrey, disappointment sounding in her voice. "Sven and I came all the way from America to see you. It was rough and for three whole days we lived on celery and roquefort cheese and hard crackers. It's a long way to come and you've not done one single thing to entertain us!"

The old man looked at Audrey from under his bushy brows.

"So you are not having a good time here?" he asked.

"Of course we are, grandfather, you know that, but it's because the Zanders and others are so good to us. They're sorry for us. It's the summer peo-

ple from the city who are making us have a happy summer," answered Audrey, speaking in her usual impulsive way. There was nothing, had she but known it, that could have had more effect with the old man. It touched his pride, that fierce pride that had always helped to shadow the sun for him. He looked at his granddaughter, at her earnest speaking face, her soft scarlet crepe frock, her hair, soft and dark, blowing about her face; then he spoke slowly:

"After all, why not? Your life is to be lived. What matter now that mine is so nearly done? Have your party, if so it pleases you."

The color rushed to Audrey's face, she leaned forward, kissing the old man.

"It's splendid! Oh I knew you would say yes, and if I wasn't sure that it wouldn't be the best thing in the world for you I wouldn't have insisted."

There were steps on the rocks below. Audrey leaned over the side of the balcony and waved to Hjalmar who was climbing towards them.

"You're invited to a party, Hjalmar," she called out joyously.

"There, there," remonstrated her grandfather a little fretfully.

"There is no need of shouting so that people sailing by can hear you!" He listened for Hjalmar's footsteps and when they paused under the balcony, he spoke.

"I'll have a word with you, Hjalmar."

"Yes, sir."

Hjalmar made his slow way around the corner of the balcony and up the great stone steps. Audrey ran to meet him.

"We're going to have a party and you're to be the guest of honor, Hjalmar." She took hold of his hands and danced him around and around. He was so bewildered that he could only blink his surprise.

"Oh, I'm so glad, I feel at home now. I'm going to give a party. I'm at grandfather's and I'm going to give a party!" She danced all the way around the great balcony and back, almost before Hjalmar reached his master's side.

"She does go, doesn't she, sir. She's full of the sun and wind, is the young Froken!" exclaimed Hjalmar.

The old count assented gruffly. "I've had enough for tonight. I'll go inside." Somewhere off in the distance a band was playing the Finnish march.

"That's the last Gustafsburg boat, Froken, they've had an excursion," Hjalmar said to Audrey, as she paused breathless at her grandfather's side.

"Oh, listen, it's the Finnish march. You know I told you we heard the King's band play at Hasslebacken. They gave us the Star Spangled Banner and we stood up. Well, afterwards, they played this —listen, let's be quiet for a minute and hear it," said Audrey.

"I'll be glad to," answered her grandfather grim-

ly. Faintly the strains of the glorious march sounded through the sweet night air. The three on the balcony listened until it had quite died away.

"It was the funniest thing, grandfather, I remember it was just after they played this march that the stranger came and asked Nore who he was!"

"Who is Nore? What are you talking about?" asked the old man fretfully. "You chatter so fast one cannot understand you."

"Why you know who Nore is, grandfather. He's a fisher boy, Nore Carlson. We all know him and we like him so much."

"Yes, yes, I daresay, the Carlsons are good people. Knut Carlson was an able seaman. You told me that his family were not in want, I think. Hjalmar, it seems to me I've seen one of the children somewhere."

"You never go anywhere, grandfather, how could you?"

"The lad Nore brought me a note once, I remember now. I was half asleep and the room was dark. But, yes, I remember he said he was Nore Carlson, I remember because I liked his father. We don't have seamen such as he was, nowadays, eh, Hjalmar?"

"Knut Carlson was a good man, sir," answered Hjalmar. He shifted his big feet and stood waiting, cap in hand.

"It was so funny though, grandfather. I mean don't you think it was odd to have a stranger come

up to Nore and ask him in such an earnest, mysterious way what his name was. It was the very same man who found little Astrid."

"Well, I daresay, but for heaven's sake, do not talk any more. Come, Hjalmar, help me to go inside. In my day children didn't talk so much." In spite of his fretful words he put his hand kindly on Audrey's shoulder.

"Have your party, enjoy yourself, I am glad for this last experience. A new granddaughter who tries to wake up her cross old grandfather."

"You are blessed, thank you just ever so much." Audrey turned towards her grandfather, the eager words of thanks upon her lips. They died there and she stood looking at Hjalmar who was staring at her. Was it fear that she saw in his eyes? At any rate he looked strange enough. He helped his master into the house. Then as Audrey was still standing there, on the balcony, he came and stood for a moment in the French window.

"The strange man, he was dark you say? Did he look like—a Russian?"

"He is a Russian, he said so. Nore saw him afterwards. He went to his studio and found little Astrid there the night she was lost, midsummer night."

Hjalmar came a step nearer. "If he's a Russian don't talk about him before the master. He was too tired to notice much, tonight, but he don't like Russians!"

"All right, Hjalmar—look, there are the boys. Hullo—Sven—Bjorn." She ran down the steps, and on down the rocks, calling to the boys, who were walking along the beach.

Hjalmar stood for a moment there on the balcony after Audrey had left him. Then he went inside. He drew down the shades, lighted a black and gilt French reading lamp on a table near the old count's chair. Then he went over and put some fresh logs on the open fire. He came back and stood before his master's chair. "You are warm enough, sir?"

"Yes, warm and not too tired. She's as bright as a bird, she's real sunshine in a place that has known darkness for so long."

"I've meant to do my best, sir," said Hjalmar. The old count looked up at him in surprise. "Who said you had not? Yes, you've stood by me through rough times. You've been staunch enough."

Hjalmar twisted his hands together.

"We're going to have a party, Sven. I'll tell you about it later," Audrey called, as she ran on down toward the shore. She jumped into her rowboat, caught up the oars and started across the bay. She was going to ask the Carlson children to her party. Her quick mind had worked it out. She had been given permission by the lord of the castle to have her party. No one could gainsay it. Tante Greta would know in the morning when her headache was

better. She would have the party early the next week. Nore and the others should be invited!

"I'll invite them tonight and tell Tante Greta afterwards. I suppose it will seem very odd to her, but it's my party!"

The clear, cold wind blew about her. "It's the sort of air that almost speaks. It's a happy air," she thought. How she loved rowing across the bay, how interesting they all were to her, Thure and Marta, and, above all, Nore and his mother. "Fru Carlson has sad eyes. There is a look in her eyes always. It is like the look in Hjalmar's tonight, but her face is so fine and there is so much love in it," thought Audrey, as she splashed the water with her oars and breathed in the wonderful air.

Little Thure was on the beach, and when she saw Audrey coming in the boat, she ran down to the water's edge to wait for her. Audrey had never been there since the Name's Day night, but they had talked of her so much, the Carlson children, and Thure danced up and down with excitement when Audrey waved to her. She called back over her shoulder to someone inside the cottage:

"It is Froken Audrey from the castle, mother, Marta, Karl."

Audrey jumped out of her boat and by the time she had shoved it half way up on the sand, Karl was there to help her, his fair, happy, browned face beaming upon her.

"Mother's here. She made us some platter for supper. She's saved the batter to bake some fresh ones for Nore when he comes in late," he told Audrey. Thure took her hand and Marta waved from the low doorway. A few moments later, and they were all chatting together, the three girls and Karl. Fru Carlson was busy in the back room, but after a time she too came out.

"Bring a chair for the Froken, you forget your manners," she admonished Karl. "They are so pleased that you have come, Froken, they can think of nothing else." She smiled kindly at Audrey and sat down on a chair near the door, facing the brilliance of the sea, yet herself in the shadow. Her face was drawn and tired. Her rough work-worn hands lay a little listlessly in her lap, there was a worried look in her eyes but a deep tenderness too.

"I've come to ask the children to a party. Sven and I are giving a party at the castle next week, and we want Marta and Thure and Nore and Karl to come to it."

A party at the castle! Enchanting, alluring, impossible! They looked at her, all of them, even the mother, in amazement. Little Thure came and pulled at her mother's skirt, leaning over so as to look up into her eyes. "Mother, mother, a party at the castle." She looked back at Audrey over her shoulder. "Me too?" she asked.

"You most of all," laughed Audrey.

Thure ran into the other room and came back with her doll, Sophie, in her arms. "We're going to a party at the castle," she crooned to her doll. "A party, a party at the castle!"

Karl shifted his weight from one bare foot to another and looked at his mother. Why did she not speak? Marta laughed joyously, clasping her brown hands about her blue gingham knees. "Oh, Froken," she gasped, laughing out merrily in her free girlish way. "You are so good to think to give us pleasure, isn't she, mother?"

Fru Carlson's face seemed shadowed in the dusk of the low-ceilinged room. She was silent a few minutes and then, like the children, she repeated Audrey's words: "A party at the castle!" She turned and looked at Audrey, and sudden tears sprang to her eyes. "Many things seem to happen. Strangers are interested in my children. Yes, they may come, and I thank you for your kindness to them and to Nore, when he was in Stockholm." When she said the name Nore, her voice softened and the tenderness deepened in her eyes. She caught some folds of her apron together nervously. Then she stood up and shaded her eyes from the startling light outside.

"I am sorry that Nore does not come. He could see you across."

"I must fly right away, or they will worry at the castle. We've not set the evening yet for the party,

but I'll let you all know, and I'm so glad you can come."

They waved to her until she was half way across the bay. Every time she looked back, one of them was waving. How small they looked, the little hut-like cottage and the black figures in front of it.

"Fru Carlson said that strangers were interested in her children. I wonder if she meant the dark man at Hasslebacken, who found Astrid," thought Audrey as she drew down her shade to shut out the glaring light that night. She was tired and happy and excited. There was to be the party, and life was full of interests and surprises!

CHAPTER 14

Boo

"HURRY, I've something to tell you, I can't wait long. Nils is here and we three are going krefter fishing." Sven shouted up to Audrey who was leaning out of her window to hear him, far below her.

"Is it anything I'll care about hearing? I'm planning games for the party. Val and I are having fun over it. Do you want to have any say about the supper, you and Bjorn?"

"No, but have a good one. Tell Tante Greta I'll not be back until late, we're going to cook the krefter on the beach," Sven called up, in answer.

"If you catch any," laughed Valfried coming up beside Audrey and leaning out also. "What do you want to tell us, can't you shout it up to us? We are too busy to come down."

Sven shook his head teasingly and seeing Bjorn in the distance, ran on down the beach. He was so far below them, he seemed only a black speck in the distance as he ran farther and farther away.

"Perhaps it was something interesting. I believe it was. Why didn't I run down and hear it?" said Audrey, looking after Sven.

"Come, we must finish the list of the things you are to buy in Boo. Do you really think you will go there this afternoon?" asked Valfried, as they sat down at the table which they had drawn close to the window.

"Of course I'll go, it's too bad you can't come too, but it will be really fun to go alone—Boo, oh, I can't believe that there is any real village named Boo." Audrey laughed as she spoke and hugged Valfried for sheer happiness. She had thought constantly of the party, and Tante Greta, once she had to some extent recovered from her astonishment, had very kindly entered into her young niece's plans. She had been quite dazed when she found that her father had actually consented to let Audrey have a party.

"Tante Greta, I want to go to Boo to-day, you know we were talking about the cake and I do so want one with spun sugar. I'd like to go and see Fru Wallman, myself; besides I do so want to see Boo!"

Valfried had been sent for as her grandmother had arrived, and Audrey had come down to find her aunt sitting alone on the stone balcony. She looked up at her niece with her very near-sighted gaze and said rather doubtfully.

"By yourself? You've never been there before. I don't suppose there is any harm in it, the boat will stop in just a few moments. You will have to hurry to make yourself tidy," she said.

"Yes, I will. Valfried would go with me but her

grandmother has come to visit them and she says it would not be respectful." Audrey laughed as she gave her aunt a hug.

"Valfried is quite right. You talk so fast, child, it is difficult for me to follow you. It is but a short sail to Boo, be sure you are back for supper." Greta Essen kissed her niece and watched her as she ran down the steep, rocky path toward the landing. Already the white boat had emerged from the rocky hiding place and was making its way towards the landing. Greta stood on the balcony until she saw her niece safely on board and had waved her goodbye, then she spoke over her shoulder to her father who had been dozing in a chair near the window and who had suddenly roused himself.

"Audrey has gone to Boo to order a cake, I thought there was no harm in her going alone. She has talked of the party all the time since you told her she might have it and she has really planned it all very well." She came up to her father and spoke with more eagerness than she had known for years. "Father, she is really a wonderful sort of child, so alive, so interested; she almost makes me feel young again." Tante Greta caught her breath with a little sob as she spoke.

"She is a fine enough child but too fond of her own way, too much of a manager. You are right though, she is remarkable." He sighed as he spoke but there was something in his voice that his daugh-

ter had not heard for many years; it was as though again there was coming to him an interest, however faint, in something besides himself. It emboldened her to say something she feared would displease him.

"Audrey has taken a fancy to Knut Carlson's family, she wants to ask the children to the party."

To her surprise the old man burst out laughing.

"Why not, why not? It's her party, isn't it? Let her ask all the fisher folk from here to Gustafsburg if so she wills. I'll manage to lock myself in here and to keep away from the noise. I told her to do as she liked, and I knew she would do something queer!" He chuckled to himself as he leaned over cautiously to poke the fire. Greta was glad to see him in such good humor, and surprised at his attitude about the party.

"I've been surprised at something ever since Audrey came," she thought smiling a little to herself. Almost without knowing what she did, she put her hand on the old man's shoulder. "Father," she said, speaking suddenly, impulsively. "Oh, father, do you remember—the old days? Yes, yes, I must speak," as the old count shook his head violently. "They are so near, just now, the old days, Sigried and I and—"

"Tante Greta, I've got a fish, a whopper, do come down and see him!"

It was Sven, he stood in the doorway wiping the beads of perspiration from his forehead with a

grimy handkerchief. His aunt came across the room toward him and put her arm around his shoulders. She had never done so before and Sven looked up at her in some surprise.

"Come, Tante Greta, if you don't mind the climb I want you to see him, he's such a stunner. My hat, but I'm glad I've caught him! Bjorn and Nils haven't thought so much of my fishing but I'll bet they'll change their minds." Greta went out with him, walking down to the rocks to see the fine big fish that he had caught. She had an odd feeling of pride about the fish, and was glad that he had caught it instead of one of the other boys. She, too, was beginning to be interested in something besides her own troubles.

Meanwhile Audrey's sail to Boo was almost at an end. She was enjoying the fresh breeze, the crisp, curling waves, and the breath of pines as they glided near shore; but she was eager to reach Boo and was the first to run down the gang plank as the steamer reached the little landing. She had had directions from Hjalmar how to reach Fru Wallman's cottage and—yes, there was the little pine path, through the wood, just as he had said. She ran lightly down the scented quiet path and then found herself, as Hjalmar had told her she would, on the main village street.

It was only a road. On one side was a long straggling row of fisher cottages and on the other, broad

meadows, fields of wheat, a gleaming tossing mass of gold and blue, for corn flowers grew among the wheat and the sun shone in full splendor.

Hjalmar had said to walk past the fisher huts and she would come to Fru Wallman's cottage at the beginning of the village. The cottage was painted green. She could not miss it. Beyond it were the cottages of the village folk, the little post office and the general store.

Boo! Was there ever so funny a name — just Boo! Audrey smiled to herself as she ran along the road. She called gaily to a dog who appeared suddenly from under a fence, and the funny squat animal trotted along side her. "Were all the dogs in Sweden dachshunds?" she wondered.

"You funny little fellow, I suppose you think this queer little Boo place is the whole world, don't you?" She talked to the dog gaily as they ran along the sun-touched road together. The air was so clear it seemed fairly to sing with life. On one side of the road now were fields of barley, oats and rye, grey-green, gleaming as far as she could see.

Two girls came along the road towards her, singing. She had heard the song before, Ingeborg had sung it:

"Oh, Jenta, Oh Jag,
Oh, Jenta, Oh Jag."

They carried a heavy pail of milk between them,

and as they passed Audrey they stared at her openly as did all the country people. Audrey was used to it and knew they meant no discourtesy. She turned back and spoke to them in her quaint Swedish.

"Is that Fru Wallman's cottage, please?" nodding towards a little green house in the distance. "I've never been in Boo, so I don't know my way about." She wanted to hear the girls talk and was not disappointed for they both started at once to assure her that indeed it was the cottage where lived the good Fru Wallman who made such fine cakes. So the young Froken had never been in Boo before. That was strange. Would the Froken credit it when they told her that they had never been anywhere else except twice to Gustafsburg and several times, of course, up and down the skerries?

They were very talkative indeed, and Audrey was so interested in them that she almost forgot about her cake. They were so very smiling and red-cheeked, their Swedish was so swift and wonderful, they showed such white teeth when they laughed! The young peasant girls were quite as interested in Audrey as she in them. How different was she from anything they had ever seen before! In her white and red sailor suit, her dark hair flying about her shoulders, her odd halting Swedish.

Yes, the little Froken would find the good Fru Wallman at home, she was baking many cakes for the garden party of the pastor. Was the Froken per-

haps English, or, no—American? Yes? Then there were two foreigners who had honored Boo with their presence, A dark gentleman had come, he was rooming at Fru Barbetsson's and he was painting their pictures! He had only been there a few days, he and his odd little servant boy, but already he was painting them. He had seen them at once, going by with the milk and that very day he had begun their picture—yes, with their black and red and yellow aprons, their hair in braids just this way, wound about their heads. They had stood against a hay-rack in the sunshine and he had worked away for some time.

There was no doubt of Audrey's interest, but she could not understand all they said, and they patiently, by pantomime and many words, tried to explain it all, for there was no doubt that the little stranger girl was very anxious to hear about the artist.

"It may be that he is her father or uncle, perhaps, who knows? At any rate she indeed seemed glad to hear all that we had to tell," they said to each other as they started on their way.

"Could it be the dark stranger?" She ran along the road. "Surely it must be Astrid's rescuer! Why had he come?" She was so engrossed in her excited thoughts that she went beyond Fru Wallman's gate and had to turn back. She knocked at the little green door and a moment later a short peaked-faced little woman in a short, white-skirted dress and white cap

peered around the corner of the door. When she saw Audrey, she opened it wide.

"Is it Fru Wallman?" asked Audrey in her best Swedish. The cap nodded vigorously and two bright little eyes gazed curiously at Audrey. Would the little Froken come in and sit down?

Audrey followed Fru Wallman inside the cottage. It was an odd room, this one in which she found herself. There were red curtains at the windows, red and white, and around the edge were woven the little figures of men and women in Swedish dress. Fru Wallman herself had woven them and the loom, a very old one indeed, stood in one corner of the room. Her grandmother and her greatgrandmother had used it before her. There was a built-in oven at one end of the room and there was the rich odor of freshly baked cake in the air. A black cat sat in front of the oven. Audrey caught her up and at Fru Wallman's invitation, sat down with her in her arms in a low chair.

"This is almost the first cat I've seen since I've been in Sweden," she told the old woman, holding pussy close to her face as she spoke.

"Yes, Froken, the neighbors call me foolish because I have her. Here in Sweden they do not want cats about, Froken, they say they bring bad luck."

"Why that's the first silly thing I've heard about Sweden. How can they be so stupid!" She patted the

cat and put her upon her shoulder where she sat and purred in gratitude for the attention.

"Fru Wallman, I can only stay a few minutes, but I want to know if you will bake a cake for me. I'm going to give a party, my brother and I. We want to ask all the people who have been so kind to us this summer, there are a good many, so we'll want a very large cake and the very finest kind you make. We'd like best one with spun sugar and whipped cream, but I'll leave it to you, I know you'll do the very best for us." She looked up smilingly at Fru Wallman as she spoke.

"Surely it shall be the finest cake that ever left this cottage. And where am I to send it, Froken?"

Audrey had stood up and put the cat down gently. "To the castle on the rocks, please, but we can quite easily send for it," she answered.

Fru Wallman took off her glasses and stared at Audrey. "The castle on the rocks," she repeated. "Was she then, could it be that she was the little granddaughter of the Greve Essen! What an honor indeed that she wished her to make a cake! Ah! but it would be a cake of beauty and of richness!" She stood in the little doorway as Audrey started down the steps. "I will send my boy, you need not worry but that it will reach the castle in good time, Froken," she said.

"All right, supper won't be until quite late, about eight. I think we'll have some tableaux afterwards."

She hesitated and then came back up the step, standing with her hands clasped behind her and looking up at the curious kindly face of the little old woman.

"The dark stranger who has come here to paint pictures, have you seen him, Fru Wallman?"

"But indeed, he had only just come and he had a funny boy with him. He lodged with Fru Barbetsson, widow of the apotek, and yes, he paid well. Yes, yes he was of the great world, Fru Barbetsson had said so. His things were of the finest and he had letters sent on from his rooms in Stockholm; they were from Paris and from Russia, Fru Barbetsson had said!"

Audrey could not understand very much of all that Fru Wallman said. She said good-bye, waving to the cat who had come to the doorway and stood looking after her. When she left Fru Wallman's cottage she walked on down the village street. There were low cottages on each side, which were painted mostly grey or white and had odd peaked roofs. A number of light tousled-haired children were playing about the doorways, they stared at Audrey and she smiled back at them. There was the odor of frying fish in the air.

The school house stood at the end of the road, a little beyond the village. There was nothing beyond the school house except an old tumbled mass of rocks which had once been a church. The sun shone full upon its grey gloom, glancing through the openings that had once been long arched windows. It

was fascinating to look through them, and to watch the trees blowing so close that the branches peeped in every now and then. Audrey at once liked the old ruin, with the ivy creeping around it and the air blowing through it. She sat down under a tree by the wayside, opposite it, folded her hands about her knees and rested.

Suddenly she gave a start. There was a face in the window, such a funny long dark face. It peered out at her, then disappeared.

"It's the boy," she thought excitedly, "it's Domski, they said he had a long, dark face. Sven said he looked rather like a monkey!"

The next moment she was sure for Domski came out through the tumbled arched doorway, stood there a moment, in front of the ruin, as though too shy to speak to her, and would have gone on had she not called out to him.

"Are you Domski?" she asked smilingly. He came close to her and removed his cap. "Yes, Froken, can I be of service to you? And if it is not forward, let me ask how you knew my name!"

So Audrey told him who she was and how they had talked of him so many times, and of the night when Astrid was lost. Domski was full of smiles and pleasure, and soon forgot his shyness so that he talked with her as well as their limited knowledge of Swedish would let them. Audrey found that Domski knew a little English, having heard his master

speak it, and they began to mix up Swedish and English words in a way that made Audrey throw back her head and laugh. Domski was having a real holiday he told Audrey. No more steep stairs to climb, no meals to cook. Just being out of doors, carrying his master's easel from one place to another and looking after his things.

"He seems in good spirits, the master. Yet, too, I do not know, he is—what do you call it, nervous, and sometimes he still looks so sad. Of the castle on the rocks he thinks much, he has been past it several times in a motor boat. Oh, but yes, he has been early always, early in the morning."

"And Nore," asked Audrey eagerly, "Nore who found you when the boys were mocking you, Sven said you told him about it that morning when Astrid was found, have you seen anything of Nore?"

Domski shook his head. "I told the master I would so like to see the young Swedish lad who was so friendly. I said, 'I feel, sir, that he is my friend,' and the master answered: 'You will see him all in good time'—there he is now, the master; listen I hear him singing."

Somewhere near them, it was true, a man was singing; his voice seemed to come from behind the church, some way off. Clearly and sweetly it rang through the still evening air.

"I whispered my great sorrow to every listening
sedge,

And they bent, bowed with my sorrow, down to the water's edge."

The haunting air floated towards them—"And they bent, bowed with my sorrow, down to the water's edge!" The next moment Eugene appeared around the corner of the church. When he saw Audrey and the Russian lad, the song died on his lips. He came towards them and bowed to Audrey. He wore no hat and the wind ruffled his dark hair. He looked tired and a little sad but as Domski had said, there was something about him, something that spoke of excitement, of suspense.

Domski did the honors at once. "This is the sister of the young gentleman of the castle who had déjeuner with us the morning when the little girl was found. This is the young lady who has come so far, from America to see her grandfather in the castle on the rocks. I present you to her—my master, the illustrious artist and the young Miss Essen." Domski bowed low as he spoke, and his whole manner was so like that of various people of different nationalities that he had seen on his travels with Eugene, that the artist could not help but laugh, and Audrey joined in.

"Indeed, we should feel well acquainted after so fine an introduction, Mademoiselle. And now Domski, will you be so good as to tell the sailor, Bergman, that I shall want the motor boat surely

tomorrow." Domski bowed to Audrey and ran down toward the shore, to the old sailor's cabin.

Before Eugene could speak after the lad had gone, Audrey said impulsively.

"Oh, would you mind telling me, sir, why you wanted to know who Nore was, that night at Hasslebacken? I've thought and thought about it—perhaps it was just an odd coincidence, but—you see I've wondered about Nore from the very first. He just seemed different from any one I've ever known, like someone perhaps in a fairy story, so you see how odd it seemed when you came up and spoke to him." She had talked on in her usual quick impulsive way and the man's face deepened with interest as she finished.

"A fairy story, who knows?" he said. "Listen, Mademoiselle, I cannot tell you anything now. It would not be quite honorable I think. First there is one person I must see. Only this can I say to you in all earnestness. For years I have had a dream, this summer I have come to Sweden, led here by a chance word. Chance? Perhaps not, just let us say, a whisper in answer to what, for a better name, I will call a prayer. What will come of it I cannot say. We shall know so soon, and in the meantime, Mademoiselle, I can, I am certain, rely upon your silence."

Audrey clasped her hands together and looked up earnestly at the man's pale, intense face. "Of course

I shall be silent until you tell me when to speak," she said.

Eugene smiled. "Perhaps there will be nothing to tell, little Mademoiselle, perhaps you and I have let fairy tales get the better of us, perhaps—"

"It is quite well about the boat, master, you may have it, tomorrow, says the good sailor, Bergman." Domski appeared suddenly from the rocks.

Audrey turned to him. "Domski," she said, "my brother and I are having a party at the castle, day after tomorrow night. It begins at six o'clock and I hope that you will come."

Domski looked at her in dumb amazement and then turned to Eugene. It was he who answered Audrey: "You are very kind, Mademoiselle, he has had only a few pleasures, he will come to your party at six."

"That is my boat whistle. I'm glad Domski will come. I'll try to be patient, I'll try to wait until I can know what it all means—your dream and Nore —and everything." She held out her hand and he took it, bowing over it in his foreign way.

They saw her off on the boat, Eugene and the boy, standing silently but not waving as was the Swedish way. The sail back was enchanting. Some peasants were having picnics in the woods and when the boat glided near shore, Audrey could hear faint bursts of music and laughter and the flash of their dresses, scarlet and gold, through the trees. On the

wide water ways the northern lights glimmered weirdly, rose, scarlet and cold green, unearthly in their splendor.

Life was so wonderful. A few weeks ago she had known only the ordinary round of things, living in a most every day world, school and meals and an occasional matinee, and now! Now she almost knew a secret and a mystery. All sorts of things were happening around her.

CHAPTER 15

In the Tower

"DON'T forget the party, Nore, it's going to be fun. Remember to fish and fish today because you'll have to play tomorrow. We're going to have tableaux. That will be fun. Tante Greta said I could go up to the tower where there are trunks filled with old dresses and things. It will be sort of weird up there, it's such a rainy day."

Audrey drew her coat closely around her as she spoke, and Nore buttoned the collar of his rubber jacket. Sven, who wore no coat at all, came running towards them along the beach. "I'm training a little so I thought I'd just come out and run like this." He wore golf trousers and a silk shirt which was drenched with rain.

"You'd better not let Tante Greta see you," said Audrey.

"Are you off for the day, Nore? I wish I could go with you." Sven spoke in jerks for he had been running hard.

"No, you'll have to stay and help a little about the

party. We're going up to the tower, and I'm not very keen about going up to that spooky place alone."

"I wish you could both come," said Nore a little wistfully. "I often wish that I had some one to talk to, but today is no time, it will be much worse." He looked off down the bay as he spoke, then at the sky. "It will be the worst storm we have had for a long day," he said quietly.

"Well, we must have sunshine tomorrow. You must prophesy good weather and lots of fun for the party, Nore," laughed Audrey.

"Yes, we must have a bully day tomorrow," assented Sven.

Nore smiled and at once his face had the look of carefree happiness that had been there when he spoke of the pictures to Eugene.

"Tomorrow, surely tomorrow will be a day of gladness. The sun will come in tonight and it will stay all tomorrow." He tightened his sail, drew his nets under the seat, slipped his anchor and sailed slowly out.

"You'll be careful if the storm is worse, won't you Nore?" called Sven and Nore's voice came back to them through the rain. "Never fear, I'll be safe under shelter."

"He's foolish to go out today but he's just as used to the water as a fish. Besides they are poor enough, the Carlsons. Hjalmar says they have barely enough to eat during the winter months. He says they live

on the money from Nore's fishing, and the mother's weaving." Sven spoke thoughtfully, then he grabbed Audrey's arm. "Haven't you any sense, standing out here in the rain? Why it's begun to pour and the wind's coming up like everything; let's go in and change and then let's think of something to do."

It rained all day. By afternoon the sky was black and the fierce sun somewhere behind the clouds gave them a purplish, sinister look.

"For goodness sake, Sven, stop whistling, you just stand there at the window and whistle and whistle. Let's do something, let's go up to the tower. I'm tired of this funny day; grandfather's asleep and Tante Greta just sits and sews. She says we can look in the trunks up there, so come on," Audrey pulled Sven impatiently by the arm.

"All right, we might as well, I suppose. Or we could go over to the Zanders, if you weren't so afraid of a little wetting. Why you could put on my—"

"Oh, hush," interrupted Audrey crossly, "I don't want to go to the Zanders. I think Valfried might come over here; it's just because she's so afraid her grandmother won't think she's attentive if she isn't waiting on her all the time. Let's see if we can find something for charades, do, come on up."

"All right, all right, come on then and don't talk so much," answered Sven, a little crossly.

Audrey took her brother's hand and laughingly pulled him towards the stairs.

"You ask Tante Greta if we can make fudge tonight, Sven, we always used to make it at home on rainy days. Listen, isn't that awful!" Audrey stopped short on the first step of the last staircase leading to the tower. There was an almost unearthly groaning and creaking and far off the sinister roll of thunder.

"It's only the wind and we are going to have a thunder storm. Wait, don't go so fast, the candle will blow out," answered Sven. The stairs were steep but quite wide and when they reached the top they found that the tower room itself was very much larger than they had supposed.

"Tante Greta said the lamp was in a standard at the top of the stairs. Here it is and here's a candle, several of them, in brackets. Wait I'll light up, it's darker than a Georgia camp meeting here," said Sven, taking some matches from his pockets. "If we are going to do much snooping around we'll have to have some light."

"Snooping, what a horrible word, Sven. You do make things so uninteresting but I'm glad you're here. Yes, the light is better." Audrey sat down a minute on an old settle to rest, and Sven went over and looked out of one of the narrow windows. He gave a low exclamation, then he said: "Some view!"

Audrey went over and stood beside him looking out.

"Oh, Sven, the sky and the sea from here, they frighten me!"

"Well, let's look around, don't stand here forever at the window. You wanted to look through the trunks for tableau things. Come on, let's have a look then." Audrey turned away, glad to leave the sight of the foaming, yellow-green sea, the angry, copper sky and the flashes of green that spoke of an electric storm. The rain slashed against the windows and the wind howled mournfully.

Sven spied one of the old canvas trunks in a corner and pulled it out into the middle of the room. He tugged at the cover. "Where are the keys?" he demanded.

"Oh, Sven, I forgot them!"

"Isn't that just like a girl? Well, I'll go down and find out where they are."

"Don't be long, will you? Hurry right back." Audrey begged, coming to the top step and looking after him as he clamored down.

"All right, but what on earth do you think will eat you?" called back Sven. He whistled as he went, bursting now and then into song in a rough uneven voice that occasionally went way up the scale without his apparently being able to help it.

"Arrah wanna, on my honnah, I'll take care of you,
I'll be kind and true."

His voice died away.

When she was left alone Audrey began to look about her. She found a large, greenish velvet curtain which would do fairly well for a drop curtain for the tableaux. She came across two dolls sitting stolidly against the wall, waxen beauties in faded finery of long ago.

"Dolls! Tante Greta and mother playing dolls," she thought, picking them up and looking at them curiously. She dreamed over them a few minutes, listening for Sven's footsteps. There was only silence.

She tried to open one of the windows a little way for the air was so musty, but she could not move any of them. They were seared by grey years of storm and dust. "Anyway, the rain would tear in; my, how it does slash against the castle, it's so angry," she thought.

"Oh, bother," she said out loud. "Sven," she called, "Sven, hurry up." The wind drowned her voice and there was only silence below. She spied a bit of color in a far corner of the room and running over she stooped and picked it up; it was a faded shawl, quite a large one. "It will come in splendidly for tomorrow night," she thought. What was that? Something bright. She stooped over again and saw that it was the edge of a gold picture frame. She looked closely and saw that it was a very large object half hidden there in that grey deserted corner. She would never have noticed it had it not been for

the faint gleaming of the gilt frame. A picture—how odd! It seemed so large, so magnificent in its setting and there it was, face downwards, on the dusty floor, as though for many years it had been abandoned and forgotten.

She tried to lift it but at first she could not move it. After several tugs she managed to move it and finally to lift it so that she could stand it upright against the wall. She was breathing heavily when at last she turned it. Then she sank back on her knees, her hands fell at her sides. The wan light from the high window touched the picture, and Audrey knelt there in her young bewilderment and amazement, staring up.

It was the picture of a young lad, sixteen, possibly a little older. He was dressed in a kirtle or long cloak of old blue. Around his waist was a leather belt, studded with jewels; about his shoulders was flung a scarlet mantle. His whole appearance gave one the thought of gold and scarlet for his hair was gold-colored and he wore a gold helmet. On his feet he wore long tan leather boots and gold spurs, a gold sword also crusted with jewels hung from his belt at his side.

Audrey scarcely saw all this, the gold and scarlet and jewels, the old-time Viking dress. She saw only the face!

Silently she knelt there in the deepening darkness, scarcely heeding the loud clamor of Sven's shoes on

the stone stairs, the wild rush of the rain against the windows.

"Tante Greta had to hunt for the keys," he panted. "She never comes up here and said she doesn't think there's anything we want—what's—"

"It's Nore," she gasped, turning slightly towards her brother. "It's Nore," she repeated.

The next minute she jumped up and ran like a flash down the stairs, down, down, to the very heart of the strange old castle. Her breath came quickly, she wondered if the stairs would ever end. Were there hundreds and hundreds of them, would she ever reach the end of them? Lightning flashed at her through the windows as she passed a landing, thunder and wind roared about her. On she rushed, through doors that creaked on their hinges as she flung them aside, on into the great hall, and through it to the library beyond.

Tante Greta, her blue shawl close about her shoulders was standing by the half dying fire. Her face was white and when she saw Audrey she came a step towards her.

"The storm," she gasped. "Oh, the storm!"

Audrey stood trembling in the doorway. The black day, the storm, the mystery! They all seemed as one, hovering about her.

"The picture," she cried. "The picture in the tower of the gold-haired boy. Who is he, Tante Greta, who is he?"

Greta Essen started back, her hand at her throat. Sudden color leaped to her face, her lips twisted piteously.

"It is the picture of my brother," she whispered. "It is Rudolph!"

CHAPTER 16

Sorrow

A MOTOR boat made its way across the bay undaunted by the storm, though at times it almost disappeared in the grey mountains of waves. It reached shore at last and Eugene turned laughingly to the old sailor who had brought him across. "You do have storms, don't you; somehow I always think of the waters around here as calm as a June night." He spoke Swedish haltingly and the sailor nodded. "When it storms, it comes like all creation," he answered.

"I'll be ready to go back later, I can't tell just when. Where will you stay?"

"I'll have a bite and a chat with old Jan Neilson, sir. Hjalmar from the castle is there generally of a Friday."

Eugene hesitated a minute as he turned away, then he looked back.

"Ask Hjalmar to come to Fru Carlson's cottage, if he is there, will you?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

Eugene made his way across the tumbled stone

and slimy seaweed in front of the Carlson's cottage. His face was drawn and his lips were closed in a way that showed him to be under a great tension. He knocked sharply at the door and it was opened immediately by Fru Carlson who had seen him coming. Eugene removed his cap and spoke at once and to the point:

"Fru Carlson, I have come to see you about something that is of the greatest importance both to you and to me. May I see you alone?"

"There is no one here, sir. The children are out in all this storm, but their oldest brother has gone to fetch them, he will see that no harm comes to them." Fru Carlson spoke slowly and quietly but her face had whitened.

"Take off your wet cloak, sir, while I mend the fire."

"Thanks, I do not mind it but it is dripping. I'm sorry for your floor." She took the cloak from him and put it on a chair which she drew close to the fire, then she stooped mechanically and picked up little Thure's doll, Sophie, which lay on the floor. She put it on the mantle piece, then she took Eugene's coat from him and hung it on a nail behind the door. Nore had worn his oilskin when he went out. His other coat hung next to Eugene's wet one. Suddenly she buried her face in the worn garment that she had patched and mended so many times, and she made a little prayer before she turned away.

"Sit down, sir." She motioned him to a chair, but he shook his head; in fact he seemed hardly to have heard her. He spoke at once:

"They told me in the village of Boo, when I asked them, that you speak English."

"Yes, sir, I taught school before I was married," she answered him, quietly.

"Fru Carlson, they told me also in the village that you are a good woman. I have only to see your face to know that it is so. I did not discuss you with the people at Boo except to find out if you spoke English. No one knows why I am here, unless perhaps you know yourself."

"What do you mean, sir, how should I know?"

"I am a Russian and I had a sister. Does that mean anything to you!" Her face turned white but she answered him quite simply:

"Are you then the man who spoke to Nore at Hasslebacken?"

"Yes. Oh poor woman this is sad enough for you; let us come at once to the point. My sister, Magda, married the young Count Rudolph Essen. This boy, Nore, I believe to be her son. I only knew by chance, or let us say, by the answer to a prayer, yes, that is nearer the truth, that Magda had a son." He touched his handkerchief to his forehead and Fru Carlson spoke then.

"Sit down, sir, we can talk easier sitting." She glanced out at the grey storm-swept beach, then sud-

denly she buried her face in her hands. Eugene sat down opposite her and looked away at the bleakness and rain. Her silent grief had answered him. There was no need for words. Then she raised her head and looked at him. "Yes, Nore is your sister's son," she said.

Eugene spoke eagerly. "Shall I tell you what I know and then will you tell me?" he asked. She nodded.

"You know that I was turned out of the castle on the rocks, and that Rudolph went with me.

"I left Rudolph in Moscow after we came together to Russia. He had a little money and I intended to help him all I could for I knew that he had a splendid voice and I hoped great things for his future.

"When the letter reached me, telling of his marriage with my sister, I was in Africa. I rejoiced that the two people I cared most for were so united. I was doing my service in the army. There was a native attack. I was shut off from all communication, and when I returned I found that they both had died of cholera." Eugene was silent a minute, then he went on:

"Lonely years followed for me. So often I have said to myself, 'If only there had been a son, a little nephew for me.' It was last April that I first heard from an unexpected source that there had been a child. I found that they had stayed with an old woman, a relative of a servant of ours, before they

had been stricken. For years she has been away in Spain with her sister who has an inn there. When I heard that she had returned I went to see her, hoping for some last word, some message from them. Then she told me that there had been a little baby son and that a Swede had come and taken him away. He had been with Rudolph at the time of his death and he told the woman that the young count had wished him to take the child to Sweden. She did not know the man's name, in fact she was so deaf and old I could not get anything from her but the one fact.

"I came to Sweden and it was easy enough to find out in Stockholm, without really asking directly, that there was no son of the young Count Rudolph at the castle on the rocks. Then I watched, hoping somehow to find out something, wondering what was best to do. One night at midsummer I saw Nore, you know the rest. Of course it was Rudolph's face, the same eyes—and smile!" He sat silently as the woman told her story.

"It was midsummer time, fifteen years ago, Marta was just a year old. Knut had been on a fishing cruise to Russia, I knew the boat was due and I felt sure he would come out that night if there was any way to come. It was nearly midnight when I heard voices. I looked through the window and saw that a sail boat had anchored out in the bay."

"You lived here, then, in this cottage?" asked

Eugene. She nodded but seemed able then only to speak of that midsummer night. "Two men waded in and came up to the cottage, Knut carrying something in his arms, and Hjalmar from the castle. It was Nore, the little baby Nore." Her voice broke as she said this. "Then Knut told me all and bade me say I would keep still about it all. In good time we can tell them, proud, cold-hearted people that they are. Now they would only cast him out, they would never believe us; as the count did to the father, so he will do to the son. So the years went by—and Nore, oh you can never know—Nore is the light of our hearts, the light of my life.

"Knut died and I promised him that when Nore was eighteen I would tell them all. And I should have kept my word, I should have told any way, for my dream is that he shall be able to see the world and learn to do and be all that he would wish." She stood up and walked over to a chest in the far corner, opened a drawer and took out something. She came back and stood beside Eugene and he rose to his feet as she handed him a photograph. It was the picture of a young beautiful Russian girl so like Eugene that instinctively they both smiled, though the man bit his lips to still their trembling.

"The young count told Knut that his sister Greta had a picture like this that he had given her. He said we might need it to make them believe. When you are ready to speak, I will give you this."

Someone opened the door without knocking and stood, dripping with rain, staring at them. It was Hjalmar.

"He knows! Oh Hjalmar, this is Nore's uncle, the brother of the wife of young Count Rudolph."

"Is he going to tell now?" asked Hjalmar hoarsely.

"I will wait a few days. Something tells me to wait," answered Eugene.

"Hjalmar would have told long ago, but he felt that I knew best. He has always said that I was the one to tell them," half whispered Fru Carlson.

"Perhaps you are the one, something tells me to wait—"

Voices and laughter, the children running across the beach and into the cottage door. Marta, Thure, Karl and Nore, all in their oilskin coats, all happy and smiling, loving the storm, loving each other. Fru Carlson stood still as Nore came up to her. He saw Eugene at once and held out his hand, smiling shyly. "You are kind to come and see us, sir." Then he looked at his mother's drawn face. "Is something wrong, mother?" She looked up at him smiling a little piteously. "Just news that I didn't expect. It's going to be all right dear, it has come sooner than I thought. I have been wrong, it should have come before!"

Nore looked a little haughtily at Eugene. "I am sorry that anyone should have made you unhappy

when I wasn't here," he said in his boyish perplexed sort of way. Eugene felt a great pride leap up in his heart as Nore spoke.

"It will be all right," he said, repeating the mother's words. Then with Hjalmar, he stepped out into the storm.

CHAPTER 17

About Rudolph

ONE, two, three, four, five! The old clock downstairs in the castle hall boomed out the hour. Audrey shivered as she ran lightly past it. Her shiver was not of fear, she was really cold. Castles by the sea are chilly places, early in the morning, even in summer.

Audrey had crept way down to the kitchen to find Smörgas, whose forlorn leanness had developed into a cozy plumpness. She had discovered him by the fire and had tucked him under her arm and started upstairs with him. She was dressed in her dark sailor suit and looked as wide awake as possible. In fact she was so excited that she had jumped out of bed as soon as she woke up.

It was the day of the party, yesterday had been the storm—the picture—Tante Greta! Audrey had stood at her window for some time after she was dressed, looking off at the still color-touched bay, so quiet, so unlike the grey wildness of the day before. She went over in her mind the talk they had had, she and Sven, with Tante Greta, the evening

before. They had drawn the curtains close to keep out the storm, had put fresh logs on the fire and she and Tante Greta had sat close together, with Sven opposite them. She had felt quite like a very little girl, though she couldn't have told why. It had been good to feel Tante Greta's protecting hand on her shoulder. She had been very pale but there was something different in her voice, relief at speaking out all she had to tell them, perhaps relief in speaking to them of that young brother she had so loved, Rudolph.

Yes, he had been just like the painting. They had acted a little play and he had been the young Viking prince. Yes, they had been happy beyond words. As children, they had played about the rocks, had fished for krefter, had sailed and picnicked. She was older than the other two—

"But, Tante Greta—I don't know that I believe it. Father never told us—why, how can it be, what's the reason. We had an uncle and we never knew it."

Sven stood facing his aunt, he put his hands in his pockets and looked at her squarely. He was frowning and puzzled and his voice was full of indignation. Sven was roused.

"It's all hard indeed to tell, Sven—your grandfather—"

"Well—what of him?" Sven spoke roughly and Audrey looked up, protestingly.

"Sven!" she warned. "What a tone to use, can't you be patient? Tante Greta is telling us!"

"Yes, you must listen, Sven. I will do the best I can. Words come slowly. I have seen none of our cousins in the north for years, and except to Hjalmar, I have not spoken of Rudolph in so long." Her voice trembled slightly as she spoke but she steadied it and went on.

"Oh, children," she said, clasping her hands tightly together in her lap. "It will be so hard to make you understand. You are so different, you are so full of your own country. You never knew your grandfather when he was younger, but he was a man of iron will, a man of strong temper."

"He still is," put in Sven, sitting down on the edge of the sofa opposite his aunt and frowning in the same perplexed way.

"Rudolph always loved the sea and used to spend much of his time sailing and sometimes he would go off on the fishing smacks. Knut Carlson, the father of Nore, used often to take him. Twice, as quite a young lad he went to Russia with him on a fishing cruise. We didn't tell father he had gone, for father —well, father has always hated the very name of Russia. Finally Rudolph was sent to the Naval Academy. He liked the life there in the navy yard near Stockholm and used to bring his comrades here for a frolic once in a while! But the school part of it was tedious to him. He was always restless."

Greta sighed deeply as she spoke. "He wanted to give up the navy. It's hard to make you understand but he seemed to be born restless. His was as sweet a nature as I've ever seen, yet he and your grandfather were always at sword's points. Your grandfather had always disliked the fishing cruises, though indeed there was no harm in them. On the contrary it was a healthy thing for a lad of fifteen to sail away with Knut Carlson.

"They quarrelled more and more, my father and Rudolph, though if only my father could have been more patient!" She sighed heavily as she spoke. Then she went on, speaking nervously, yet hesitating now and then as though unable to find the words in English to express herself.

"Rudolph became fascinated by Russia but was wise enough to say little about it here at the castle, for I tell you, children, I have never known anything quite like your grandfather's unreasoning hatred of Russia. He had fed it all his life, this hatred. He had been taught to hate it; his ancestors had fought, only to lose Finland. The Essens are hard haters and hard fighters but they are poor losers." Tante Greta looked into the fire without speaking for a few moments and then she went on:

"It is perhaps so with the whole country. We are so proud, even the little naval cadets wear a button on their coats that is covered by a lapel. They cannot let the button show until the very remote, and I

should say, impossible day, when Finland is our's again."

"I know," put in Sven. "Bjorn told me."

"There isn't so very much more to tell, dears. If only I could forget it instead of bringing it all back!" She put her hands over her eyes, but when she spoke again, it was quite steadily:

"Rudolph left the navy and travelled about as he liked. For a time father gave him an allowance, thinking he would settle, but he never got over his disappointment about Rudolph's leaving, his tiring of the navy. Father never understood him. If Rudolph had lived, if there had not been so bitter a quarrel, I believe he would have found his wings. I believe that some great talent was his and that he would have come into his own. One day there was a quarrel here, Rudolph had brought a Russian friend here, someone he had met on the continent. Your grandfather in one of his tempers, when he found out the man's nationality, ordered him to leave at once. That was a terrible thing to do to a guest, but I have told you that your grandfather was unreasoning in his hatred for the Russians. Rudolph's temper could almost match my father's. He, too, left the castle with his friend that same day, in spite of all my pleading with him to stay. He never came back." Greta sobbed quietly for a moment and Audrey, who couldn't find her handkerchief, wiped her eyes on a corner of Tante Greta's dress.

"We heard soon after that he had married a Russian girl, the sister of the artist friend and then—his father vowed that never again should he set foot in the castle. He wrote him to this effect, but whether or not he ever received the letter I do not know. He died within a year, both he and his wife, of the cholera. That is all. There is nothing more to tell. Your grandfather is a sad old man, do not judge him too harshly. I've often felt, especially since you happy, bright children have come, that father grieves more than we know, more than we have realized,—that he deeply regrets it all!"

Audrey stood up and walked about the room. She was trembling and twice she started to speak, to say the word. "The picture upstairs, it is Rudolph, but don't you see that it is just like Nore. Oh, can you not see that it is almost Nore, don't you know that there is something more to tell? The artist friend is here, within an hour's sail at Boo!"

She did not say the words, she only thought them, she walked back and forth from the window to the door, her hands twisted together. The little careless Audrey had somehow gone, not entirely, but just the first of growing up had come. Things would never be quite the same again.

"If there had been a village here, of course you would have known before this, but we are so far from everything. We see none of the old friends. Oh, I haven't cared, I haven't wanted to care about

anything until you came. My eyes have failed me so the last few years and there has been a tired feeling as though nothing mattered. Perhaps if there had been a village I might have forgotten myself in looking after the people. But we are just a strange old castle, all alone."

Sven stood up and put his hand on his aunt's shoulder. He spoke gently but slowly and perplexedly. "What a story, it's almost stupid!"

"Sven!" exclaimed Audrey reproachfully.

"Why didn't we know, any way, why in time didn't father tell us? What was the use of making such a mystery of it all?"

Greta put her hands out with a hopeless sort of gesture.

"Your grandfather again. He made your father promise that he would never speak of Rudolph, it was an obsession with him. I think he was hardly responsible. We had just heard of Rudolph's death and I do not suppose we can ever know what your grandfather must have suffered. He wanted to forget that there had ever been a Rudolph, but that he could not do. Your father was a stranger though he was vouched for by mutual friends on the continent. He had heard of the young Count Rudolph, of course, Rudolph who had been banished from his father's house, who had married in Russia and had died there. It was nothing more to your father than a sad, fantastic story, except that he grieved for Sig-

ried in her sorrow for the loss of that brother she had so loved. Your father promised to keep silent always about Rudolph. You see, there was no reason why he should not. He wanted Sigried, that was all, wanted her with all his heart. I think he wanted most of all to take her away. He wanted her to forget it all, if she could. He thought father a strange man and, as I say, he promised him never to speak of Rudolph. There was no reason why he should not, we were nothing to him, nothing at all. I know that he thought us strange, strange people. He only wanted Sigried. He took her away and there has been only sadness and silence, since!" Greta spoke a little bitterly, and the next moment put her hand out to the two who had come close to her. "Forgive me," she whispered. "I know indeed that your father is an honorable man, a fine man. I liked just the glimpse I had of him." She sat silently, gazing into the fire as though lost in long ago memories.

Audrey knelt down and put her arms around her and said tremulously:

"Dear Tante Greta, you are never to feel alone again. I'm going to be over here so much that you'll be sorry you have such a troublesome niece who invites herself to visit so often!"

Sven cleared his throat. "Yes, and some day you're coming over to have one fine old time in 'Little Old New York,' Tante Greta. It's my opinion

you're one brick," and to his aunt's astonishment he leaned over and gave her an awkward kiss.

Audrey thought it all over the next morning. When once she had wakened there had been nothing to do but get up at once and for a long time she had stood there at the window, her arms on the sill. It was all so strange; yesterday, the days before, all seemed like a dream. The tower, the picture! Over and over the events of the day before went through her mind. The talk with Tante Greta had been the strangest time of all! Rudolph! The old days as Tante Greta spoke of them. How near she had made them seem! Eugene, could it be he who was the artist friend? What did he mean? Nore—was Nore their cousin, was such a thing even to be imagined! Nore, the child of Eugene's sister! Her quick mind had leaped from one thought to another as she stood there at the castle window in the early morning.

Suddenly she realized with a start that it was the day of the party. There had been so much else to think about in the last hours that the fascination of the party thought had waned for the time being.

The party! What joy! Surely somehow the sun had come to stay! The storm had gone, but the mystery was still there.

The tower! She would have no fear of it now in the sunshine. The tableaux! She would go up to the tower and look through the things before any-

one was up. A splendid idea! It would be a little lonely to go alone, she would find Smörgas!

The stairs were steep and the way seemed long.

"How plump you are now, Smörgas. Margot has given you cream every day, no wonder you are such a fine strong cat instead of just a scrawny one," she said, patting the grey head as she started up the tower steps.

It was a pleasant enough room in the early sunlight with no storm raging about its windows. Audrey rummaged to her heart's content and found in the old trunks so many things that she wanted. "Just what we'll need for the tableaux!" she exclaimed, holding up a red velvet gown with a long train. "It will be such fun making up the tableaux, I'll go over and see Val about them after breakfast. You're going to be in one of them, Smörgas darling." She gave the cat a hug, dropped him down and turned her attention to a smaller, black trunk that stood in one corner away from the rest. Smörgas peered curiously about for a few moments; then curled up in a corner by the window to finish his interrupted sleep.

The black trunk opened easily. Audrey drew out an embroidered counterpane and then gave a quick exclamation. What was it? Could it be? Yes! There they were, the long mantle, the gold jewelled studded sword, the helmet, the tunic. It was the dress of the young Viking prince, the dress that the boy Rudolph, the handsome, careless, sweet-natured

Rudolph had worn when his portrait was painted. A picture that his sad-tempered father had put from his sight, alone there in the tower room.

Suddenly as she knelt there in the early morning with the birds singing joyously outside, the idea came to her. Nore—the picture, the tableaux! It was a daring idea! She would say nothing, no one must know until the time. Nore should wear the Viking prince's dress. Nore in the tableaux would be the picture! Her grandfather,—would she dare? What would he say or do? She would do it in spite of any fears that might come to her. That evening Nore should be the picture in the tower!

CHAPTER 18

Anticipation

"The Bergstroms, three of them, the nice Gustafsson boys who have the pony, that makes five, Margarita Mamburg, the two Thorburgs, the Wicanders—oh, I'm so glad that Ingeborg is going to spend the night with me,—you Zanders, the Carlsons and Domski." Audrey bit the end of her pencil after speaking and looked across at Valfried. The two girls were up in the tower room. All about them were the spoils from the trunks, faded velvet hangings, cast-off ball dresses, old, twisted, pewter candle sticks, all kinds of discarded long-forgotten articles.

"You know you are funny, Audrey, quite the oddest girl I've ever known. Do you mean you have asked the Russian servant boy to come to your party?" Valfried threw back her head and laughed but quite good-naturedly. "And the Carlsons! They will be frightened out of their wits, coming here to the castle on the rocks! You are a dear, though, and I love you." She gave Audrey a sudden hug as she spoke.

Audrey's only answer was a smile and the two

girls were soon deep in their plans for the evening.

"Don't you think it will be best to dance for awhile at first? Tante Greta knows the klapp dans and several of the others. The piano is a little off tune but it's not bad and Hjalmar is going to play his harmonium too. It's just what we want, isn't it?"

"Yes, splendid, I'd rather dance to a harmonium than anything else," answered her friend, holding up a sea-green satin skirt and gazing at it critically.

"It's working out so well. Grandfather has actually promised to appear. It seems almost like a miracle, for he declared he wouldn't be seen and I just felt I didn't want to have the party at all. I was so unhappy I cried. Tante Greta told him and he said finally he would come in to see the tableaux. Val, I'm nervous about them, why we haven't even thought out what we're going to have. I thought we could sort of make up something at the last minute. I've one or two ideas but I don't know if they're good."

"Where is Sven?"

"Gone for the cake. I was so afraid something would happen, that Fru Wallman would forget to send it. It's worried me a good deal. Sven was hanging around, not knowing what to do, so I sent him off to Boo. See, Val, there are three whole ball dresses, then there is this uniform. It belonged to grandfather's uncle, I believe Bjorn could wear it.

Wouldn't it be fun to have a romantic tableau? I've thought of something." Audrey began to tell of her inspiration. Valfried burst into shrieks of laughter.

"Audrey, you are so funny, fancy Bjorn in a romantic tableau!"

They both laughed merrily, Audrey dancing about the little room, singing at the top of her voice, "I'm so excited, I'm so excited!"

"A party at the castle on the rocks! I should think you would be excited," answered Valfried, but Audrey knew that it was not just the thought of the party that made this day seem different from any other.

"The cake's here, what do you want me to do about the decorations? Audrey, come on down!" Sven's voice called up from below.

"Is it all right? Did you take it to Margot?" his sister called down anxiously.

"How should I know? I didn't sample it on the way; it's big enough and heavy enough," Sven called back.

The two girls ran quickly down the tower stairs, down, down, until they came to the kitchen and the cake. It was a beauty and no mistake! It was the creamiest, most delicious-looking cake ever seen, covered as it was with spun sugar, crowned as it was with a small Swedish and a small American flag.

"Where on earth did she get our flag, such a dear

little baby one. Doesn't it look wonderful? What a surprise for everyone!" exclaimed Audrey.

"Yes," answered Sven, eyeing the cake with admiration, having followed the girls to the kitchen. "I told Fru Wallman I knew you'd be ever so pleased with the flags!" Sven smiled at Margot who was coming out of the pantry and she gave him a handful of pepparkarkor which he put in his pockets. Meals were very informal that day, the old count's being taken to him as usual, on a tray and the rest of the family taking a bite when it seemed most convenient. Tante Greta had thought this an odd way of doing but Audrey had told her it was the way they always did when they had parties in America, so she had consented smilingly.

Valfried had to run home after awhile, promising to come back after lunch to help with the decorations. Audrey waved her good-bye from the rocks where she had come for a breath of air, then ran on in to the entrance hall. Her aunt came towards her.

"We're going to have some surprises tonight, Tante Greta," Audrey exclaimed as she came up to her.

"I know a surprise, too," answered Greta, smiling. "I know quite a wonderful surprise!"

What could it be, Tante Greta's surprise? Surely nothing to do with Eugene and Nore. What then? This wonderful surprise that Tante Greta knew about!

The day passed only too quickly. It was a long task, trimming the great hall and the rooms in the lower part of the castle. Sven and Bjorn and Nils Wicander worked hard.

"I say Bjorn, there's Nore, call him in—Nore, Nore, come on, come here, look up this way, Nore!"

Bjorn and Sven called with all their might, which was not necessary for Nore heard them at once. He pulled in shore and ran up the rocks, and up, up to the castle steps. The boys had come out for a moment's rest and hailed him warmly.

"Come on and see how we're getting on trimming up this old prison. Gee, but it is a gloomy hole," said Sven, rubbing his arm which he had severely knocked against the side of the fireplace in the hall.

Nore hesitated a moment, standing there on the threshold of the castle. He looked somehow tired and puzzled, as though he had worried through a long night of unsolved mystery. His mother was suffering. What could it mean? Nothing else seemed to matter until he knew what made that look of misery, almost of fear, in his mother's eyes.

"Audrey wants to see you," Sven told him. "Come in and I'll call her. She runs down to the kitchen every once in awhile to ask Margot how things are getting on about the supper. I wish she'd keep away, she can't manage Margot as well as I do. If the old girl gets in a temper, we're dished as far as supper goes. Here Nils, run down and tell

Audrey that Nore is here. I want to get this dirt out of the way before Tante Greta comes down, it's off the pine branches." Sven raised a cloud of dust with his broom and Ingeborg Wicander gave an exclamation as she came running in, her bag on her arm.

"Goodness, Sven, what are you trying to do? Good day to you, Nore, isn't it fine after the storm?"

Audrey came running upstairs, embraced Ingeborg and smiled a welcome at Nore. At a glance she saw that something was amiss with him and when the others were busy talking and planning about the greens, she motioned him to one side.

"Nore, I want you to do something for me tonight. Please promise that you will. We are really friends, you and I, so you can't refuse. We are going to have tableaux. Bjorn is to be in one with just girls, so you needn't feel that you'll be—what is that long word—conspicuous. Listen, Nore, I want you to dress up in a Viking prince dress. I—I can't explain, only you'll promise won't you? Sven has the things in his room, will you go and try them on?"

Nore nodded smiling. "Yes, Froken, if it pleases you," he answered her. There was a listlessness about his tone.

"What is it, Nore? Tell me, something is wrong?" Audrey spoke in her warm impulsive way and Nore answered her as though it were a relief to speak.

"It is my mother, Froken, she is not happy. Something has happened, I cannot know any sunlight at all when my mother is unhappy." His voice trembled as he spoke and the color came to his fair face.

"I'm sorry, oh you know I am. Nore, things are strange—oh, I don't know what to say, but do you feel as I do that something is going to happen? It may be a very happy thing; try to be glad today if you can, try hard, will you?"

Nore nodded, trying to smile. Sven called him and he followed him slowly up the stairs.

Ingeborg and Audrey had little time to talk up in Audrey's room, there was too much to do. Ingeborg was to share Audrey's bed that night and the two friends were looking forward to a long chat over the whole affair after everyone had gone.

After a hasty lunch Audrey went in search of Hjalmar. She had wondered that he had not been around in the morning, offering in his clumsy good-natured way to help, but she had not seen him at all. She found him sitting on the same old, overturned rowboat where she had first tried to talk to him. He sat there puffing at his pipe. Audrey ran up to him and stood looking down at him curiously. She had made no sound with her white sneakers on the firm, damp sand and when she spoke to him, he jumped.

"Hjalmar, where are you, aren't you coming up to see how gay we are? The boys have trimmed the

halls. Do come—and, Hjalmar, you told me the other day you'd play the harmonium for the dancing. Don't you think you and Tante Greta could practice together? I'm afraid you'll never keep in time, if you don't."

Hjalmar rose to his feet. He seemed a very old man indeed, as he stood there in the strong sunlight. There was in his eyes a look, what was it?

"A party, glory be, a party," he said heavily. "I dunno what to do, I dunno what to say, I meant to do right but I ain't. Play the music wid Froken Greta? Yes, but my time's all right, she's the one that kind of dreams while she's playing." He walked along beside Audrey, across the beach, but in spite of all her chatter, he would not speak again.

CHAPTER 19

The Castle Opens Its Doors

"VALKOMMET, Valkommet," said Tante Greta as she shook hands with the guests, standing near the fire in the great hall. The evening had turned cold, though it was clear and fine, and the splendid fire of logs was a welcome sight to the children, all of whom, except the Zanders and Wicanders, had come by boat.

Tante Greta wore her soft grey dress and the pearls that she almost never took from their home in the old bronze jewel case that stood on her dressing table. There was a little color in her cheeks and she seemed in her quiet way quite as excited as Audrey.

"I've brought my new doll. I thought Thure Carlson would like to see it. She's just a poor little girl. Her house hasn't got any paint. Bjorn rowed me over there one day. I like Thure," Astrid told Audrey after she had kissed her enthusiastically.

"Hush dear, they're coming and here is Domski," whispered Audrey, holding out both hands to

Marta Carlson who was trying not to look as frightened as she felt.

They had all come. Marta, the big sister, Karl, very conscious of his new shoes and bright green tie and his suit, made over from one that Nore had outgrown.

Domski too! Not shy in the least! Domski would have told you that he was used to very good society. Had he not been abroad with his master! Had he not himself helped their French cook to prepare a very fine dinner for people who were really great! Artists, poets, musicians!

The fun began at once, for they started dancing right away. The klapp dans, what fun it was! The Hambo Polka! The Française which is like our lancers. They danced so long that supper was later than Audrey had intended. It was served in the great dining room which they seldom used and they all marched through the long rooms, while Tante Greta played a martial air on the piano, Hjalmar coming in, always a little behind, with the harmonium.

One of the surprises was pulling snappers in which were caps (the tissue paper caps which one wore). They were something quite new to the Swedish children and were hailed with delight. Audrey had brought them with her, in her trunk. They were left over from a Christmas party that she and Sven had given at the hotel. There were just

enough to go around and one left over, to be sent to Petrus Wicander who was at home, ill with a cold.

The fried chicken was done as only Margot could cook it, the chocolate had just the right froth, the hot rolls and the French fried potatoes were done to a perfect shade of golden brown and everyone did ample justice to everything. The ice cream had maroons inside, and Fru Wallman's cake was perfection!

What a babble of voices! When they were all back again in the great hall, Tante Greta glanced nervously towards the library. What would her father say to the noise? Everyone was laughing all at once, everyone seemed to be joking, happily disputing or agreeing. An amiable scuffle went on between the younger Bergstrom boy and his neighbor Olaf Gustafsson. Tante Greta was a little dazed but greatly relieved when Audrey suggested playing "Going to Jerusalem." Poor Tante Greta, it only increased the noise. She was not familiar with the game and had had no idea that the fact of missing or losing a chair could cause so much intense excitement and hilarity.

After a while Audrey beckoned to the few of them that were to act in the tableaux and they stole away.

"Hjalmar, do play with them, you were splendid with the music. Don't look so glum, you can be such fun," whispered Audrey as she started upstairs with Ingeborg, Valfried and Nore.

"I don't be in playing mood, tonight, Froken Audrey," Hjalmar whispered back.

"Well, help Sven with the curtain. Domski can help too. Put it at the far end of the hall, and do have grandfather out in plenty of time and in the very front seat," she answered as she ran up after the others.

The rest of the party helped to fix the hall for the tableaux. It was Domski who suggested it when Hjalmar asked him to help them with the curtain.

"The chairs are outside on the balcony, now let us help one and all. The kind friends are doing this for us, shall we stand by and do nothing at all?" Domski waved his hands in his usual dramatic way and, in spite of his poor humped back, looked quite like a major calling his army to order. Domski wore his best suit and a very gorgeous red silk tie, tied by the artistic hands of his master who had seemed very excited and had come with him in the boat quite to the castle steps.

So they all moved the chairs inside, placing them at Domski's suggestion.

The count was to sit in the carved armchair, close to the front, Tante Greta next him, the others where they liked. Astrid was a little unhappy, even though Tante Greta asked her to sit next her. Thure Carlson had not seemed at all impressed by her doll. She had brought her own Sophie, which her brother Nore had sent to Stockholm for. He had saved part

of the berry money for it. It was fun picking lingon in September; she and Marta and mother had done most of it because Nore had been too busy.

Astrid was unhappy about something else. They had not asked her to be in the tableaux. How could her beloved Audrey have forgotten her!

The big, green velvet curtain hid the back of the hall and the children were able to come down the tower stairs, through the door into the hall, without being seen. How slow they were! Why didn't they hurry? How they giggled! Astrid was really quite disgusted with them.

Suddenly the door of the library was opened and the old count appeared on the threshold. Hjalmar held him firmly and guided his slow footsteps across the hall. There was a silence. The children were awed. The old Count Essen! They had heard of him, they had even seen him on his balcony in the distance, but now he was as near to them as could be!

Instinctively they stood up. The old man glanced at them from under his bushy brows. After all he was not really as old as they had thought. In his evening clothes, with his white hair smoothly brushed away from his hawk-like face, he still had a certain charm. He seated himself with difficulty and then there was silence for a moment, behind the curtain.

The nine o'clock boat from Stockholm put off one passenger at the castle landing, a short well-dressed

man with iron-grey hair and a grey moustache. He carried a suit case in his gloved hands. For a moment after the boat left, he stood looking up at the castle which loomed above him. Then he spied some one a little way off, sitting on the rocks, a man whom the cliffs had hidden from the boat. The newcomer went out of his way on his journey up the rocks, because for some reason that he could not have told himself, he wished to speak to the man who sat so quietly, looking off at the evening sea.

It was Eugene and when the newcomer spoke to him he jumped to his feet in his quick graceful way. Almost at once he guessed who the stranger must be.

"I've come to see the castle on the rocks and I understood from a conversation I had over the phone this morning, that there is a party on foot!" The American appearance and the voice! There could be no doubt, he was the father of Audrey and Sven.

"You are the parent then of the two children? The young daughter is wonderful, she has asked my little lame servant Domski to her party."

Eugene smiled in his charming way and perhaps the other saw something wistful in the smile for he said quickly,

"And are you not invited too?"

Eugene smiled though there was a weariness in his voice as he replied:

"I was once sent out of the house when here as

a visitor, for no fault except that I was a Russian. My coming into it brought only trouble as you know, for I am sure that you are Sigried Essen's husband."

Mr. Bradford looked at Eugene in surprise.

"You were Rudolph's friend, you are Eugene Kamanoff?" Eugene nodded.

In the quick impulsive way so like Audrey's, Mr. Bradford took Eugene's arm.

"Come, I've an idea we can slip in, unobserved. That's what I planned to do. I want to surprise my children and see the party from the background, as it were. Let us see if the door of the balcony is unlatched. Perhaps we can have a glimpse of them without being seen and no one will know that you have been there." Even Eugene's pride could not resist the idea. Nore was there in the home of his ancestors, and heaven help them all, he did not know it.

The two men slipped in through the door and stood silently at the back of the room while the curtain rose on the third tableau. The hall had been darkened a little though a brilliant splash of light swept in through an opened curtain.

The tableau was "The Soldier's Good-Bye," announced in loud tones by Sven. It showed a lovely young girl in white and gold brocade, who stood looking up at her soldier lover bending over her as she pinned a rose on his coat. There was loud applause for this, though the more romantic were dis-

appointed when Astrid announced in a loud voice: "That's my brother and sister. Valfried didn't want to have Bjorn for the lover but the soldier suit wouldn't fit any one else, so they made Bjorn be the lover. He didn't want to a bit!" Every one laughed at this except Valfried and Bjorn who heard it, from behind the curtain.

The fourth tableau was the "Death of Charles the Twelfth," and everyone agreed that it was clever. They had found some bolts of cotton in a box in the tower room and this scattered about made capital snow. Sven was the king, wounded to the death and lying on a stretcher carried by his faithful followers, Nils and Bjorn, while the old shepherd in shabby coat, his head bowed over, the hat in his hands, stands with his little boy to do honor to the king, there in the snowy mountain pass. Audrey had called the Bergstrom boy in from the hall, deciding it was best not to have Nore appear in the tableaux until the last, and Astrid to her intense delight had been summoned to take Petrus's place as the little boy. Nils had brought some of his clothes along and Astrid made a nice plump little boy. She was not in the least bit frightened which was more than could be said of some of the others. Sven, in the shabby soldier's uniform, lay very still with the blood-stained bandage about his head; he did not stir an eyelash even when his grandfather said: "Well done!"

Tante Greta kept her eye upon him and rejoiced to see how eager he was, how his face lighted up and yes, how proud he was of his grandchild as he lay there, representing the brave hero king. Now and then Greta glanced back towards the window but her nearsighted eyes saw little in the half-darkened room. Tante Greta had received the phone call that morning. She indeed knew a surprise for Audrey and Sven.

The next picture was "The Goddess of Liberty," and one could tell by the tone of Sven's voice that he considered it quite the best one of the evening. Audrey stood alone, showing her profile to the audience. Her aunt had made the soft draperies that she wore, had made the star that shone on her forehead and her eyes filled suddenly with tears as she gazed at the earnest face of the young girl, her little American niece.

The old count applauded first of all and Mr. Bradford whispered to Eugene, "My father-in-law must surely have a change of heart since he applauds the Goddess of Liberty!" He wiped a tear or two from his eyes as he spoke.

The young Goddess was in such a state of excitement as she fastened the sword to Nore's belt that she could scarcely speak. It was so startling, why he *was* the picture! Sven touched her arm. "Look here, Audrey, Nore is so much like that picture up in the tower, maybe Tante Greta wouldn't like us to

do this. It might be a shock to grandfather, we ought to have thought of that before." There was great concern on Sven's honest face as he confronted Audrey, just before the curtain went up. She herself was beginning to feel her knees tremble; for the moment she, too, was afraid. Sven did not know, could not guess, what this might mean. She only said in a voice that she tried to keep steady:

"Announce the picture and don't be stupid."

"A Young Viking Prince," said Sven in a clear voice and the curtain was drawn aside. There was a moment's silence. A young boy stood before them dressed in a dull blue coat which reached to the top of his high, tan, leather boots. About his shoulders was flung a scarlet mantle; a leather belt, heavy with jewels, was fastened around his waist and from it hung a jewelled sword. On his head was a golden helmet and his appearance was as a setting of white and gold in color, for the hair that showed below the helmet was gold and the sensitive face was very white. His head was flung back, and the sun, now streaming through the stained glass window at the balcony, made a dazzling glare of color about him.

For a moment there was silence and then Hjalmar leaned forward to steady the old count who had half risen to his feet. Suddenly he gave a low cry turning so as to steady himself on Hjalmar's arm and looking up at the figure of the young boy. "Hjal-

mar, Greta, it is Rudolph," he cried. "It is Rudolph," he said again. Then he sank down into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

CHAPTER 20

Nore

AUDREY always felt that the rest of the evening was a dream. The children went home almost at once after the last tableau. She had felt them crowd around her and she had heard them tell her that it was the most beautiful and the very jolliest party they had ever known.

It had all been confusion! Hjalmar had led the count away and then all at once she saw him—her father! No dream! Just his own, own self! She ran towards him across the room and threw herself into his arms sobbing.

"Daddy, daddy, daddy!" It seemed as though she could not stop crying, even with those arms around her. The long day, the perplexity, the worry about the tableaux, then the surprise! She knew she was acting like a baby but still she cried until her father said: "Well, I've come all this way and is this going to be my only reception. Come here, boy," holding out a hand to Sven whose freckled face fairly shone with joy. "I'm hungry, I wonder if there are any crumbs from the rich man's table; let's go, just we three and see what we can find to eat."

Tante Greta appeared from the library and gave her brother-in-law a welcome. "Nore is in there with father, and the Russian is there. It was Hjalmar who insisted; yes, they are there with father and I think you must all go in. I do not know what to think. Oh George, do you know what they say—Nore—Nore Carlson is Rudolph's child. Hjalmar has always known!"

"And you never knew. Oh Tante Greta, it was because you were always just here." Audrey choked down a sob and smiled through her tears. "I can go in to grandfather now," she said bravely. So the three, with Tante Greta, went into the library. The old man sat in his chair by the fire and Nore stood opposite him, Eugene near his nephew, and Hjalmar near the count. The curtains were raised high and the last good-bye of the sun flooded the room. Across the sea a boat was coming, a rowboat. It was Nore who spoke first after Audrey and Sven came in with their father.

The old count held out his hand to Mr. Bradford. "I was in the secret, Greta told me. You have come at a strange time, but I am glad!"

Nore glanced out of the window. "That is Karl; the children went home to fetch mother," he spoke quietly, in fact he seemed the most composed of any of them. He looked at old Hjalmar and smiled, then he turned to the count. "It doesn't seem as though it could be true, sir, but if it is—"

"There is no doubt," Hjalmar burst out, "Oh master, I've longed for this day, I have been fairly crazed to know what to do. I always was a thinking of, of that scene, them awful days when you was so mad like. I was waiting till the right day came—and so God help her was his—was Fru Carlson." Hjalmar covered his face with his hands as he spoke.

Nore came close to the count. "You must not blame Hjalmar. He has meant to do right by us all. He speaks truth when he says he did not know what to do, for he felt that you would not believe him."

Tante Greta's voice broke in.

"Don't you hear, father—it is Rudolph's voice." Her own shook as she spoke to the old man.

Count Essen reached out and took the hand of the old servant. "I know that he was only waiting for the time to speak, that he has always wanted to do right, by me and mine."

"The young master whispered to Knut Carlson when he was a dying — 'Tell them when he is eighteen,' and so did Knut's wife promise him, when he, too, lay a-dying." The old man walked over to the door and opened it for Fru Carlson. She was very white and her eyes sought those of Nore. She hardly seemed to see the others. "Yes, it was all true, she had the picture of the young Russian girl, Eugene's sister, the picture that the young count had

given Knut when he was so ill. There was no use going over it all—it was true. Nore was not her son!"

Someone had left the door open and suddenly Smörgas appeared in their midst. Plump, confident and quite at his ease, he spied Audrey and jumped up into her lap.

Audrey said to Sven afterwards, "He broke the ice." She picked him up and held him, listening while Eugene told them a little about his life and some of the hopes he now had for Nore. "I believe that he will be an artist. It is what he longs to be and he shall have his chance. There is money enough to educate him and the genius, if it is there —well, it will show itself. He shall see Europe, he shall see the art of the world!"

There was tenderness in the look that Count Essen gave to Nore as he stood there listening to what Eugene said. He turned and held out his hand to the Russian, as though mutely asking his pardon for that long-ago, hasty act of great discourtesy!

Suddenly Fru Carlson stood up, clasping and unclasping her hands.

"Believe me when I say that I would have told when he was of age. I would have told. Hjalmar knows that is true—if there had ever been any kind of joy or human love about this place I would have told before. I'm glad to have him come into his own, glad with all my heart." She caught her breath

and then was silent. The old count spoke to her:

"I do believe you and I know the lad has had the very best from you. You must come here when you will, always you will be welcome."

"Yes," whispered Tante Greta. "Yes, you must come always when you will."

It was Nore who spoke then. He smiled first at one and then at the other. He spoke gently:

"Why—you didn't think, you don't mean that I should leave mother?" He smiled again joyously. "Never!" He threw back his head and laughed, a happy boyish laugh. Care seemed suddenly to have fallen away from him, he turned to his grandfather. "I hope we'll be good friends, grandfather, it's all hard to understand." Then he turned to Eugene. "Are you really going to help me to be an artist?" he asked. "That is what I want most. I've talked of it so often with mother. She knew I would always be happiest with her. Even if she hadn't made a promise she would have told grandfather who I was, when I was of age, so that he could help me to be an artist. You see, she didn't know about Uncle Eugene. My mother is everything, I'll never go away from home. You didn't think I really would, did you?" he asked incredulously, looking from one to the other. "When I go away to study it will only be for a little while, just until I can have a place for mother, the right kind of home for her and Karl and the girls, but most of all for mother."

He put his hand through her arm and drew her gently towards the door.

"We're all tired tonight, we shall talk some more tomorrow." He bowed in his quaint formal way towards his grandfather and his aunt and then spoke impulsively to Audrey: "Oh, Audrey, we're cousins, I'm so glad, isn't it splendid!" Joy touched his face.

"Splendid!" she answered joyously. For once Audrey was almost dumb. She could only say that one word—splendid.

The others bade them a quiet good-night and Nore went out with the only mother he had ever known. Together they rowed across the bay.

Of course this isn't all, it's only the beginning. So much will happen to them all. Nore learning many things, Audrey and Sven coming every summer to the castle on the rocks. Nore and Marta and Valfried and Bjorn, and yes, after some years, even Ingeborg and Nils, visiting the Bradfords in New York. As for all that happened, whether or not Nore did become a great artist and how life worked things out for all of them—ah! that I cannot tell you now!

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM